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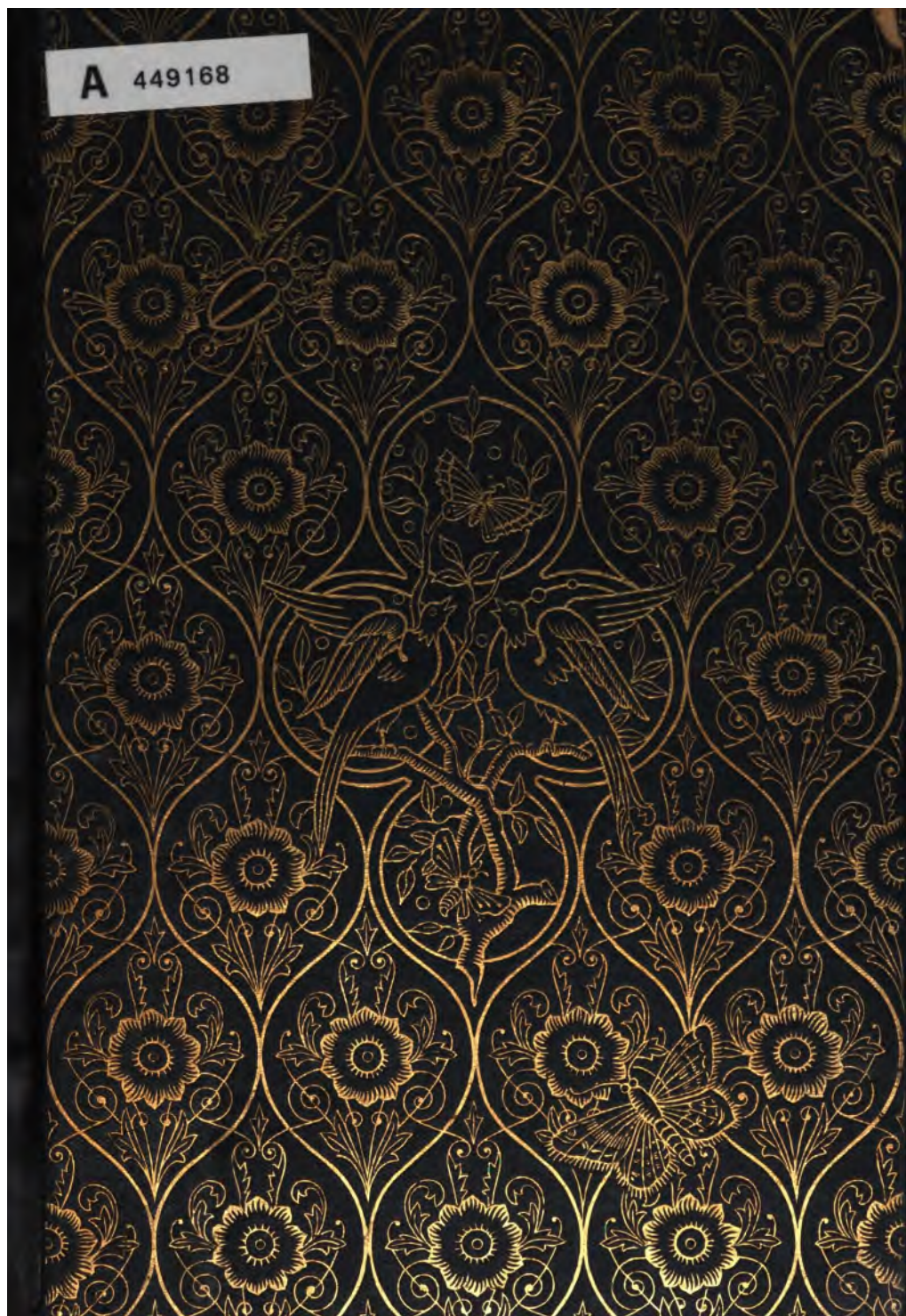
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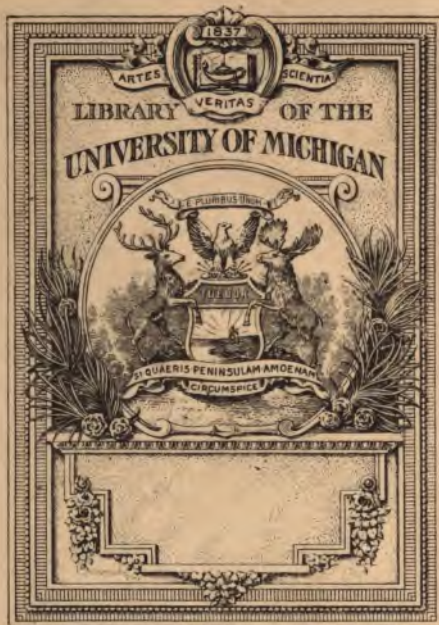
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THE BRIC-À-BRAC HUNTER.



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ON CHINAMANTA

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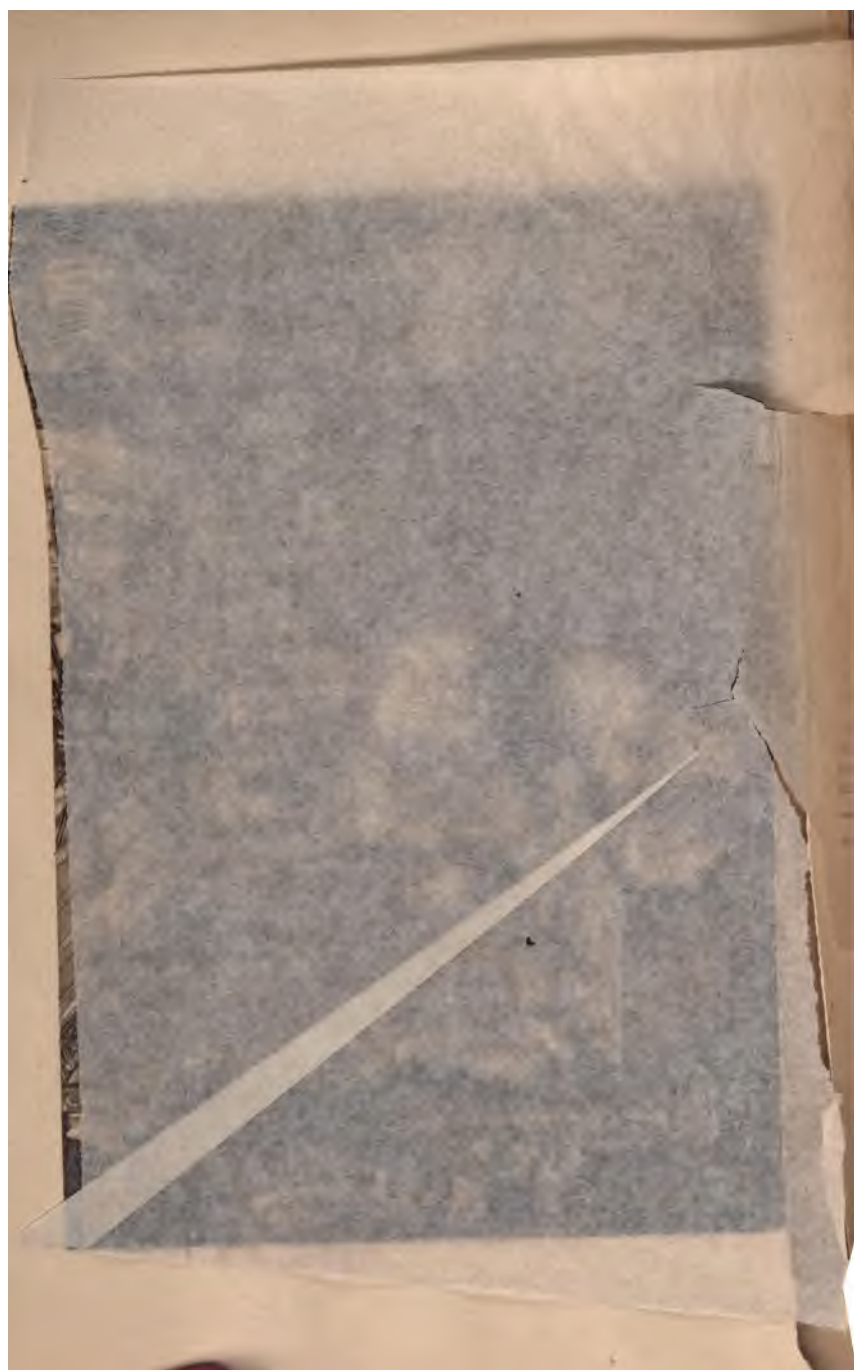
BYNG HALL



LONDON:

AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1875.



THE
BRIC-A-BRAC HUNTER;

OR,

49233

CHAPTERS ON CHINAMANIA.

BY
MAJOR H. BYNG HALL.



London:
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY.
1875.

WYMAN AND SONS, PRINTERS,
GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS,
LONDON, W.C.

PREFACE.

THIS little work, which my love for ceramic art induced me to write, as it also led me never to lose a chance of gaining any practical information which might seem to bear upon it—has already received so much favour from the public, that I have been desired to make further researches, and I now venture to produce it again corrected and enlarged, the more readily, because that which, in days lang syne, was solely a pleasure and possibly a profit to the few, has now become a positive mania with the million,—a taste which has gone far to raise the most mediocre specimens of ceramic art as far beyond a moderate purse, as is their intrinsic value, and has produced a vulgar and absurd estimation of very indifferent works under the odious name of fashion.

For my part, I can readily understand that a real collector should endeavour to obtain a specimen of all the fabrics at home and abroad. But why a Worcester cup without beauty, a Plymouth milk-jug, a Bristol teapot, or a Staffordshire figure of a shepherd and a lamb, should command prices formerly paid for a lovely piece of Wedgwood, solely because they bear the mark of the manufactory whence they were issued, is beyond my comprehension.

But these acquisitions, although they may make the fortunes of dealers, are not fine art. The prices given for fine Sèvres, Chelsea, early Dresden, and the productions of German, Italian, and Spanish fabrics which have long ceased to exist, such as "Buen Retiro," which is now imitated so as to deceive a good judge, Capo di Monte, Carl Theodore, Fulda, Fustenburg, and others, the groups of which are lifelike, can readily be understood; yet, because they are simply productions of this and that fabric, it by no means follows that they are of any value.

Meanwhile there are very many dealers, not of

the first class, who would far rather pay any amount for a very moderate Chelsea figure, or a Worcester cup,—in some cases rare and beautiful,—than touch a Buen Retiro of the softest paste and the finest modelling, solely because English china is for the moment the fashion. It sells, in fact. In so far, dealers have reason. They say, and they are right, that the purchaser may tell his friends who visit his collection this is Plymouth, Bristol, or what not,—an idea which appears to me to be highly ridiculous.

True, that not long since some Sèvres vases were sold for a fortune,—they were specimens of the finest; but no vases, even if solid gold, could be worth the price given for these, and it is only the rich, and at times those who have little knowledge of what they buy (though not so in the case above), from whom such sums can be obtained. A Sèvres vase, in one instance, may be priceless, in the other, valueless. It is, however, the eccentricity and variety of taste, which, as regards the ceramic art, is as variable as the change in ladies' bonnets, which causes

pecuniary extravaganzas to be occasionally indulged in.

I had recently two charming Vienna groups ; and, although Vienna china, till recently, appears to have never been greatly estimated among dealers, the gilding and painting of these was beyond praise. Knowing that a friend of mine had received £100 for two Dresden groups of precisely similar character, very little superior, if at all, to mine, I offered them for sale, but the highest bid was £20 ! Why so ? Solely, because they were Vienna, and not Dresden. Had they, in the present mania for English china, been Plymouth or Chelsea, any reasonable sum demanded would have been readily paid for them.

This sort of taste and dealing, however, appears to me to be erroneous, and will find its level sooner or later, and only real art and beauty, from whatever country or fabric, will carry the day with those who have money to purchase and taste and experience to guide them.

Meanwhile, in no manner do I presume to be a first-rate connoisseur as regards the ceramic art,

which is scarcely to be obtained in the researches of a life. One science bears so closely on every other, that without a knowledge of all there can be no complete acquaintance with any.

My object is simply to give a slight sketch of the various hunting-grounds over which I have ranged in search of bric-à-brac—a very agreeable pursuit—which has caused me untiring interest and delight; and thus, by offering the slight practical experience I have gained during foreign travel, I may cause amusement, if not instruction, to the many thousands who have similar tastes, when they visit the spots where I have so frequently wandered.

H. BYNG HALL.

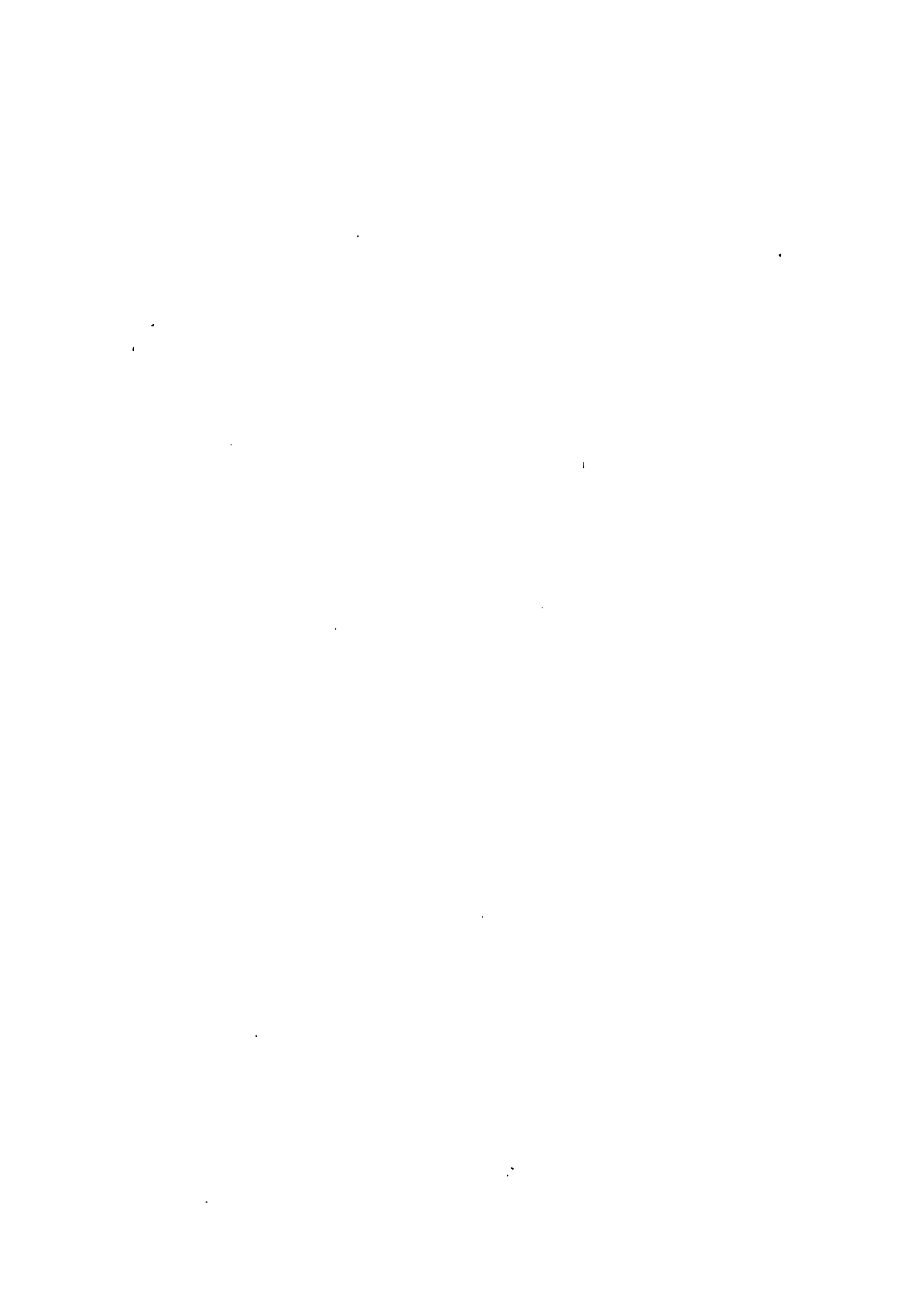
MADRID,

May, 1875.



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THE BRIC-A-BRAC HUNTER.

CHAPTER I.

ON BRIC-A-BRAC IN GENERAL.

"Southey was right when he told his brother, that if he would use his eyes on his travels, and in his own natural language describe truthfully all that he saw, he would be enabled to entertain the most educated reader, and charm the least."

IN a useful little work entitled *Les Eccentricités de la Langue française*, I find the word "Bric-à-brac" or "Bric-à-bracquer" explained thus:—"revendeur de meubles et d'objets d'art." The celebrated Monsieur Pons, a remarkable collector of days lang syne—a romance of whose life has been so ably imagined and written by Balzac—continually uses the words bric-à-brac and bric-à-bracquer; the latter simply implying a collector, or one passionately devoted to works of art.

In plain English, the amiable and numerous

lovers of this refined pursuit are generally spoken of as "curiosity-hunters;" but this denomination is, to my mind, a gross and uncourteous error, inasmuch as works of art, of whatever nature, if they be of any value, can scarcely be denominated curiosities, although a curiosity may possibly be a work of art. I own to a very unpleasant indignation when asked to exhibit my very humble collection as if it were a Museum of Curiosities: while poor Monsieur Pons was as jealous of his art-treasures as an ardent lover of his mistress, and scarcely desired that any eye save his own should behold them. Like Othello, he would not "keep a corner of the thing he loved for others' uses." In our day bric-à-brac shops abound in all the capitals of Europe, as well as in most large towns abroad and at home. These emporiums of art and *virtù* are commonly called "curiosity-shops," because possibly it has been found difficult to describe them more correctly. I deny, however, *in toto* the accuracy of the term. A Worcester or a Wedgwood vase, Sèvres, Dresden, or Vienna cups, Capo di Monte, Buen Retiro, or Chelsea groups, are not

curiosities, but, if good specimens, are works of the most refined art; though they may be found in the so-called curiosity-shops. If the name be correct it certainly follows that the Kensington Museum, the Musée de Sèvres, the Vienna Museum—collections public or private—should all come under the same denomination.

I confess I have as yet never been able clearly to ascertain why certain individuals of varied tastes and habits become as they advance in life the collectors of china, old plate, manuscripts, autographs, pictures, and all those miscellaneous objects of art or relics of past generations classed under the comprehensive name of antiquities, apparently without having any refined or ardent taste for the rare and the beautiful. It matters little who they are; but it is a fact that there are nowadays thousands and tens of thousands of persons whose prevailing passion is the collection of "bric-à-brac"—in which comprehensive term I include all that is precious and beautiful as well as mediocre in art, whether pictures, porcelain, ivory or wood carving, terra cotta,

miniatures, jewelry, or plate. I can fully understand that the man of wealth should be anxious to adorn his home with works of rare art, to be looked on and admired by others, yet on which individually he may scarcely care to gaze, and of the real value of which he is in a great measure ignorant. I can also fully understand that the dealer in "bric-à-brac" should be desirous of obtaining a thorough practical knowledge of the value of the goods which he barter, in order that he may buy in a cheap market and sell in a dear one, till eventually the love of art-possession may so creep into his heart that even his commercial soul may suffer a pang at parting with some rare and precious object ; and I know that among the higher class of dealers there are to be found men of varied attainments, and great taste and knowledge. But I know also that the Honourable Mrs. Bonheur, or my Lady Lovecup, will very often invest a large amount in the purchase of a Sèvres cup of that most lovely colour termed "Rose du Barry," or of a Wedgwood vase of the most elegant form and design, in order that others may

envy and admire ; while to the fair and aristocratic possessor herself the one is a mere cup, the other simply a vase.

I believe my friend Mrs. Haggleton's taste for collecting the plate of Queen Anne's era originated in the fact of her aunt having left her a teapot of that admirable period of the goldsmith's art in England. The teapot inspired an ardent desire to possess other articles in the same style. The lady mildly commenced with salt-spoons, and became in due course the proud owner of mustard-pots, salt-cellars, and one large piece of sideboard plate, which from the day she purchased it to that of her death every night faithfully accompanied her to her bed-room. My old bachelor friend Croker, again, began collecting Wedgwood ware because some one had told him he possessed a very fine specimen ; while to my certain knowledge he was as ignorant of its value and exquisite design as his own footman could have been.

There are, however, far higher and more agreeable motives which lead the man of refined taste to become a real practical collector, whatever his

position or means; and when that man is found who collects from pure devotion to art, he at once becomes a benefactor to the human race, as his object is to instruct and improve the artisan of our day, whether it be in furniture, lace, porcelain, jewelry, texture designs, or wood-carving.

It is an obvious fact that the art-genius of the day in which we live is turning to the past for its designs. We invent nothing that is new and beautiful, but we repeat much of the beautiful of past periods. Our jewellers owe their most elegant designs to Etruria and Greece. In domestic furniture we are reproducing the graceful forms of the French upholsterers who furnished the salons and boudoirs of Athenais de Montespan, the Pompadour, the Du Barry, and the luckless daughter of the Cæsars. And when we aspire to make our dinner-tables elegant, we seek to imitate the delicate fragility of mediæval Venetian glass, embellished with designs copied from classic exemplars. And the bric-à-brac shops of all the capitals of Europe are filled with lace, every design of which is a revival.

Now all these manifest features of industrial art are to be attributed to the collections of those who have dedicated their time and experience to the gathering together of various specimens of the art of past ages. The treasures of the Kensington Museum and those in Paris, Vienna, and elsewhere, which have lately been thrown open to the public, are of infinite practical utility. Yet I will venture to say that the individuals who collected these art-treasures commenced their pleasing labours in the first instance from the simple desire to gratify personal vanity, or with the less noble thirst of gain. Say nay who will, there is no greater pleasure to the collector than that of buying cheap and selling dear, even if money be no great object. Indeed, I have known more than one collector sell his whole collection for the mere pleasure of recommending his researches for another, or to obtain some precious and unique relic, the possession of which shall elevate him above all vulgar connoisseurs. Depend upon it the collector is more or less the slave of vanity, although he may be also a man of taste. My experience tells me

that there are people who claim as their own a rare Venetian glass, a noble Wedgwood vase, an exquisite Sèvres cup, or an elegant Dresden group, or any perfect or rare object of art, who would like to smash every one else's vase or group, as the Dutch tulip-grower would have crushed under his feet the rival bulb of a rare and precious flower, that it might bloom in no other garden than his own.

The amateur collector who wishes to indulge in a little traffic with his friends need not be ashamed of dabbling in the business of the bric-à-brac merchant. Very aristocratic individuals have dealt in such merchandise. His Highness the Duke of Brunswick dealt in diamonds; and the Duc de Morny was a dealer in pictures, as was Marshal Soult before him. When once a man becomes a collector, he can hardly escape becoming a seller.

The Children of Israel have always been conspicuous dealers in the fine arts; and the Rothschilds are well-known collectors of the finest art-treasures of the past.

Kings and queens, emperors and men of high degree, for centuries past have loved the ceramic

art with no common passion; while, by an assiduous cultivation of the same art, men of low birth and little education have raised themselves to honour and high estate. Who that dwells with pleasure on the search for bric-à-brac has not perused the fascinating life of the poor potter Palissy? What collector does not remember the struggles and triumphs of the noble-minded Wedgwood? What worshipper of art has not listened to anecdotes of Böttcher and De Blaquier?

The Chinese emperors by high rewards alone obtained the then unrivalled egg-shell china, since so gracefully imitated, and sold for so low a price. The Celestials testified their admiration of the inventor by enrolling the potter-martyr in the catalogue of deities.

The Duke of Urbino introduced the highly artistic, if not the graceful, majolica.

Henry II. and Diana de Poitiers gave the name to the varied beauties of Faience; while that prince and his consort, Catherine de' Medici, developed the genius of Palissy. Augustus the Strong, Maria Theresa, Frederick the Great, and other reigning

princes of Germany, founded and brought to perfection at their own expense the porcelain manufactories of their respective countries. Russia, where day by day the art is improving, and where it has indeed already obtained considerable celebrity, owes to Elizabeth and Catherine the Second its progress. In Italy royal patronage also nurtured the ceramic art.

Charles III.—whose memory be honoured for this single act—founded the unrivalled manufacture of Capo di Monte and Buen Retiro, to my taste the most interesting and refined of all ornamental china, not excepting Sèvres, which Pompadour's influence over Louis XV. helped to bring to remarkable perfection; while the bewitching Jeanne Marie Vaubernier secured the lovely rose-colour so well known and so highly esteemed among connoisseurs as Rose du Barry.

At home we have as high, if not higher, claims to the perfection of ceramic art. William, Duke of Cumberland, supported the far-famed manufactures of Chelsea, while the name of Queen Charlotte added to Wedgwood's glory.

Men of all ages, all countries, all ranks have devoted themselves to the worship of this beautiful in art.

I have known a dignitary of the Church, a man of high attainments, a Christian in all the attributes of life, to go home from a sale with a bilious attack because he had failed to secure a group bearing the monogram of Carl Theodore, for which porcelain—and I fully sympathized with him—he had an intense liking. One of the keenest sportsmen of my acquaintance was as eager to obtain a Sèvres cup that he had been longing for as to kill his fox after an hour's run. Ay, and two of our bravest admirals, Nelson and Byng, were not only intense lovers of the ceramic art, but bric-à-brac hunters of no common experience: in the families of each are retained valuable relics of their labours.

Seeing that the collection of rare and precious examples of art has now become a fashion as well as a passion, I venture to think that the friendly advice of a very moderately experienced collector may be of some value; and with that belief I propose to tell my readers how for years, amid the

varied pursuits of life, the search after bric-à-brac has afforded me days and hours of unalloyed pleasure, not altogether unaccompanied with profit, and always combined with great interest and instruction.

To the wholly ignorant amateur no book ever published, however valuable, interesting, or correct it may be, is of much avail; whether it be Braignart or any other, not excepting that useful work to all collectors, the Catalogue of Bernal's Sale, published by Mr. Bohn, who is himself the owner of a valuable and highly interesting collection of varied porcelain and ancient pictures. If the bric-à-brac hunter have not the eye for art combined with refined taste, whether as regards ancient or modern works, together with years of practical knowledge, he is a mere child in the hands of the dealers; and even when possessed of taste and experience he is not unfrequently deceived. An extensive and correct list of works is doubtless of great theoretical service to the collector; but, alas, in the age in which we live, I have yet to learn that there exists any article ever

produced by the inventive mind and hand of man that cannot be in some measure—ofttimes admirably—imitated. I therefore venture to assert, after long years of constant practice and study, that practical knowledge, that instinctive appreciation of perfection, which is the fruit of long experience, are the only real and efficient guides by which the bric-à-brac hunter may secure prizes in the markets of the world. A Sèvres cup may be a Sèvres cup, and worthless, save that it is Sèvres. There is Wedgwood and Wedgwood. Between two Dresden groups there may be all the difference of the highest and lowest art. A Carl-Theodore figure may clearly be denoted by the initials of Carl Theodore and the Crown Elector of Palatine, a Berlin cup may be graced with the pencil of a Watteau, and yet the specimens may not be true, the porcelain may not be fine, the outline and execution may fall far short of that perfection which alone can satisfy the eye of the accomplished connoisseur. Again and again will the novice in these researches become the victim of his own ignorance, unless he avails himself of

the taste and experience of some practised collector. How is he to distinguish hard paste from soft? how resist the fascinations of modern Wedgwood, which, beautiful as it may be in its form and colour, lacks the keen and artistic outline of those never-dying productions of Wedgwood's own day? Will the novice judge and estimate the merits and demerits of the Marcolini and the royal period of Dresden china? No, believe me; clever as he may consider himself, he will not.

Look at some of the old productions of Frankenthal and Carl Theodore. How striking in character, how lovely in design and execution! what living figures produced in clay! Gloat, if you be a connoisseur, on a Capo di Monte or Buen Retiro group, whose living grace and loveliness have scarcely been rivalled by the sculptured art of Canova or Gibson. What avails it to tell you of the works so carefully produced, in the words I have named to you? If the passion for such works of art exist not in your heart, second only to the love of woman, you may seek for treasures in vain; and your researches will only obtain for

their result the merest everyday specimens, to be picked up in the highways and byways of every capital in Europe.

Think me not presumptuous. *Moi, qui vous parle*, am only a humble collector, and have been frequently deceived, though the passion has reigned for many a year in my breast, and is in a manner hereditary. For many years I have followed the pursuit of a collector throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Alas, only in the most simple and economical fashion. But far removed as my power of purchasing may be from that of a Rothschild, it has been my privilege to linger with admiring eyes and longing heart over some of the finest specimens in Europe. I have gloated, I have longed, and then have flown from those treasures as from typhus-fever, conscious of my inability to purchase the finest, and not caring to possess inferior examples, or modern manufacture. But if my means are not large, my experience has been extensive; and as an official wanderer over the face of the earth, I have been enabled from time to time to peep into many a bric-à-brac shop in

the various continental capitals, which others may never have had the chance of visiting. Thus have I made friends with many a choice specimen, erst the ornament of a palace, and have by good fortune secured some small treasures for the adornment of my cottage home. As I smoke my meditative cigar, and gaze with contemplative eyes upon those precious Sèvres cups and groups, which are to me as are his scalps to the Indian warrior, memory recalls many a quaint record of my wanderings and researches, which may be of value to those who may chance to follow in my footsteps in search of a bric-à-brac, and which may not altogether prove uninteresting to those who are comparatively indifferent to these ceramic pursuits. In my early boyhood, I confess for many a year to have imagined that all the fine specimens of china I looked on were the productions of the Chinese. I believed, in fact, that china was made in China, and in China only. But years passed on, and I found that, after all, that which is termed Oriental china and Japan ware was far less pleasing to my eye and taste

than those works of art which are purely European.

In Addison's day no aristocratic mansion was considered properly furnished without a vast quantity of grotesque objects in china, or, as the ladies called them, "loves of monsters." Oriental china was then contraband; and I conclude that everything that was contraband was fashionable. Many of these "loves of monsters" may be had in the days we live in; and I trust my readers may learn not to be taken in by them, unless they chance to discover a monster of pure "forget-me-not blue" of real antiquity, and then both his mane and his tail are of value. The colour must be that beautiful tint which the French term *bleu d'œil*, or *gros bleu*, which makes some specimens of Sèvres invaluable.

And now, ere I ask my readers to walk with me through many a high-street and by-street of the various capitals I have visited, and pass with me a few hours in pure bric-à-brac hunting, I must own to being an enthusiastic lover of art, whether that art be that of the painter or the sculptor, or

whether it arise from the noble institutions of Sèvres, Dresden, Chelsea, Worcester, Derby, Frankental, Höchst, Capo di Monte, or Buen Retiro, from the never-dying elegance of Wedgwood, or the more recent talent of Minton. To my mind there can be no purer pleasure than this unaffected love of art, nor is there any taste more elevating in its influence on a man's nature; for I most fully believe that he who possesses this taste, and cultivates it, will soon turn his back on the grosser pleasures and frivolities of life. The higher order of art is, moreover, the constant handmaid of religion; and many of the great masterpieces which adorn the collections of Europe owe their origin to the inspirations of piety, and have been for centuries, and are still, powerful aids to meditation and devotion. Art has, and ever will have, a high and noble mission to fulfil.

That man, I think, is little to be envied who can look on works of art and go forth without being in some sense a better and a happier man; if, at least, that we feel ourselves the better and the happier when our hearts are enlarged, as we sym-

pathize with the joys and sorrows of our fellow-men.

I have not seldom been asked by those who have chanced to visit my cottage home—the windows of which look on a small but well-kept lawn, o’ershadowed by trees such as are rarely seen out of England, and which lies within gunshot of the winding Thames—what possible delight I can have in so small a room crammed with old china. It is true, my treasures are generally admired; true, that the specimens which during my travels I have gathered together at trifling cost are coveted by many; while the questions, “Are you not afraid they will be broken? who do you get to dust them? why not sell them?” and so forth, are asked with unfailing sameness. The reply of my only and motherless boy, if present, is as follows: “They are papa’s toys; he is keeping them for me.” I should be almost ashamed to confess *how much* pleasure these fragile treasures afford me. For hours I sit amidst my friends, pen or book in hand. That group before me was purchased under particular circumstances, and not

only recalls to mind pleasant days, but tells me much of the history of the country whence it was obtained, and the era in which it was produced.

Who will venture to say that the lips of a Pompadour or Du Barry may not have kissed those small but exquisite Sèvres cups? Is not Wedgwood paying me a morning visit with his friend Flaxman as I look on those vases? Do not the guns of Wellington's artillery sound in the distance as I contemplate that glorious group of Buen Retiro? And does not the Bay of Naples spread itself before me, and the towering peak of Vesuvius send forth its flames, as I handle that creamy china cup, with its exquisite painting of Capo di Monte? My Chelsea ware recalls the memory of Addison, who dated so many of his pleasantest essays from that locality. My Battersea reminds me of sceptical Jacobite Bolingbroke. At one moment I am at Florence, then at Vienna, Petersburg, or Madrid. For a few minutes I dwell in the Palatine, and thence take wing to Dresden. Now I touch my lips with the thin emerald-

coloured glass of early Venice, then hold aloft the heavier but richer goblet of Bohemia.

Meanwhile I endeavour to create in the mind of that boy, whom love induces me to mention, and who calls these gems my toys! yet never breaks them as his own, that it is not the mere graceful work of art on which you look, whatever the pleasure, that is alone valuable, but the knowledge gained of the early art history of other countries, which adds to the ceramic collector's pleasure and instruction.

Moreover, it is pleasant to human nature to feel that you possess some work of art which is admired by those who have full knowledge of its beauties; but if this were all the merit of your researches, the reward would be light indeed.

From the earliest ages to the hour my pen traces these lines, the earth, which God has granted for the produce of man's sustenance, has also contributed to his pleasures; and science and art have united to produce from that earth comforts and luxuries, the expenditure on which rivals all the sums lavished on the other arts. Genius

and practical skill have been brought into existence under the most marvellous circumstances; and when we consider that out of a natural substance, originally of unapparent value, productions have emanated, intrinsically worth more than if they had been formed of the precious metals, we may well conclude that a practical knowledge of, and a judicious taste for, the exquisite ceramic specimens dispersed throughout Europe, are not an unimportant result of civilization. Therefore let not the collector of so-termed bric-à-brac halt in his researches; the pursuit brings pleasure to himself, oft-times profit, and is one of the least egotistical of tastes, as it also gives pleasure, instruction, and profit to others. Come with me, as many who love the treasures of art, and let us wander over Europe. I shall at times take you to odd places, and tell you strange stories; but you will be ever learning and never regretting. Come!

Böttcher, Haring, Morin, Lucca del Robbia, and Palissy, are my constant companions. Ay, and how full of interest is their society! how faithfully they recall the memory of past ages! and

how fully they convince us that, despite all the go-ahead and vulgar money presumption of the day in which we live, they may have rivals, yet have no equals either in taste or manipulation !

Alas for the ceramic taste of the world of so-called fashion (odious name) in which we live ; it is not the beauty or the fine art, but the pure eccentricity which rules the market.

CHAPTER II.

HINTS TO BRIC-A-BRAC HUNTERS.

"There is no more potent antidote to low sensuality than the adoration of the beautiful.

"All the higher arts of design are essentially chaste, without respect to the object.

"They purify the thoughts as tragedy purifies the passions. Their accidental effects are not worth consideration ; there are souls to whom even a vestal body is not holy."—SCHLEGEL.

SHOULD my readers agree with me in the sentiments thus written, many of them will be the more inclined to follow in my footsteps, or join me in many a ramble, replete with incident, in search of that which may be justly termed art treasures in other lands ; if so be not precisely in the hope of obtaining objects of higher art, to which I confess my heart has longed and hungered in vain, yet at least in search of the beautiful and attainable.

In days lang syne, when those who had the means and inclination were wont to visit foreign lands, the knowledge necessary in search for bric-

à-brac was confined to a limited circle. Moreover, the taste was by no means evinced as it is by very many in the present day. Thus, pictures were purchased at high prices, and brought home as Murillos or Raphaels, Rubens or Titians, solely because they were purchased in Italy or Spain by those who had probably much more money than taste or discrimination; at all events, little knowledge of pure art, or that refined and correct eye, granted by God and nurtured by practice, which could alone guide them. It is almost inconceivable what an amount of rubbish thus found its way to the rural homes of England and to the picture-marts of the metropolis. It is true that a few possessing the requisite knowledge obtained prizes, while others made fortunes; but in those days they had a fine field, and little opposition. To-day such good fortune is rare indeed, and happy is the man who chances to meet with a gem. Porcelain was also purchased from every capital of Europe and the East, neither purchaser nor seller having much appreciation or knowledge of what they bought or sold; and thus, while now

and then a charming specimen was obtained for a sum insignificant in reference to its real value, some worthless object was often purchased at a price given for a perfect example of Sèvres or Capo di Monte. Alas, is it not so now!

Then, travellers went their way rejoicing in well-sprung comfortable English carriages, driven by postilions in heavy quaint boots and long pigtails, content with what was, admiring all they saw, paying all that was asked of them, eating everything, and pronouncing it good because it was foreign, and gratefully acknowledging the well-paid-for civilities and courtesies they received—if they did receive them.

Many a high-titled nobleman of our fatherland, many a possessor of broad acres, with a courier and interpreter in the rumble of his easy-going carriage, rushed from city to city, from river to lake, from snow-clad mountain to luxurious vale,—here, there, everywhere,—scarcely enjoying the beauties of nature granted by God, ignorant of one word of the language of the country through which he travelled. Having decided on the termi-

nation of his journey at a given spot, to that point he hastened, little caring how he got there, or at what cost; deterred neither by dirt nor by what might be justly called discomfort; enduring with a heroic resignation bad roads, bad hotels, and high charges. But *nous avons changé tout cela*; the fairest spots in Switzerland, the highest peak of the Alps, the most rugged pathways of the Apennines, the remotest German spas, the wildest fisheries of Norway, are now explored by the travelling Englishman. You meet your tailor at a picnic in the Black Forest; your bootmaker salutes you on the "castled crag of Drachenfels;" and if you elect to dine at a *table d'hôte*, you are apt to find yourself amidst a host of compatriots whom perchance you may have met with in Cheapside or Whitechapel, when some untoward event may have called you to either of those localities. Bah! I would sooner go up in a balloon, or pass a week at Kovno, on the banks of that historical river the Niemen.

Let me not be misunderstood; hundreds of doubtless admirable people do now go abroad,

whose grandfathers, nay fathers, scarcely knew that Malta was an island ; and most unquestionably would have been plucked by the Civil Commissioners if requested to explain the position of Bodenbach, within so short a railway flight of that spot where Böttcher, an apothecary's assistant, lived, and brought to light in 1755 the exquisite beauties of Dresden china.

And yet, forsooth, many of these doubtless amiable Saxons must have bric-à-brac, in order to show themselves equal in taste and refinement to my Lord This, the Duke of That, a Baron Rothschild, and other distinguished connoisseurs who are known to have collected glorious specimens of Wedgwood, Sèvres, or Majolica. And why not, if they really prize them, and have the means of obtaining them ? I do not refer to the money, inasmuch as half the tradesmen in the West-end of London or in Paris can wear three new hats to one of half the younger branches of England's nobility, and pay for them too. It is not a question of money. Real treasures are all but unobtainable ; or if met with, the price asked for

them is so exorbitant, that the novice holds up his hands with astonishment or disgust; and, being utterly unable to form a correct judgment of that combination of beauty and art which constitutes a perfect object, refuses the actual worth of his money, and only secures modern trash. I do not presume to say that there is not much that is beautiful and highly artistical in modern art; but it has never been my good fortune to meet with anything to equal the purest specimens of ancient porcelain. The reason of our modern inferiority is clear. The celebrated artists who in other days painted on china were equal to the best artists of the present era; and who among our leading great men, at home or abroad, would condescend to paint on china, save at a price that would make a cup or a vase equal in value to a first-rate picture?

Now we will suppose that a party of travellers arrive, we will say, at Dresden. They walk forth to visit the city, to see its justly acknowledged beauties, and, what is still more delightful to the feminine mind, its *shops*. Amongst these one of

the first that attracts their attention is the emporium of a dealer in bric-à-brac. Miss Harriet gazes with delight at the cups and vases, with here and there a group, displayed in the window, and thus exclaims: "O, mama dear, look at these lovely cups; are they not beautiful? While we are in Dresden, we must buy some Dresden china;" and so they enter, accompanied by a commissioner. There are commissioners and directors of all denominations in these days as thick as blackberries in autumn: fishery commissioners, railway commissioners, travelling commissioners, and, alas, financial commissioners. But Miss Harriet's commissioner is one of the class less aristocratically called guides, or interpreters. The hotel commissioner is a shabby-genteel gentleman, who, like the rest of the world, will do anything for any one—at his own price. Miss Harriet carefully handles a cup, and exclaims on its unrivalled beauty; she gazes with rapture on a figure or a group; she flutters admiringly over a *compotier*; while the owner of these modern and moderate works of art points

out the marks: this of the Marcolini period, and that used under the direction of Höroldt in 1720—and so forth; to the genuine nature of which signatures or warranties Mr. Commissioner very readily testifies. So dear Harry, having expressed her delight, becomes the possessor of some objects of art, which she fondly supposes to be the rarest gems, and which possibly form the commencement of a collection destined to rival that of the late Mr. Bernal, or very many others—at least such is the belief of dear Harry, as it is of a hundred other dear Harrys and Georgies. “And pray, what *are* we to believe in, if not in marks and signatures, monograms and crossed daggers?” ask my fair bric-à-brac huntresses in despair and anxiety. Alas, my dear young ladies, I regret to say that, amidst all the chicanery of this limited-liability and swindling era, there is none equal to that of a foreign bric-à-brac seller.

However, the cups and figures and so forth are purchased, carefully packed, and treasured as “the exquisite old china we bought in Dresden, my love—an enormous bargain, though the price seems

very large to people who don't understand that kind of thing." And poor Miss Harriet remains happily unconscious that similar treasures, ay and possibly far better, might have been purchased in the Strand for half the money ; since I have no doubt dear Harry's " old " china was only recently produced at Meissen, that glorious manufactory, which all lovers of art ought to visit.

Now my object in writing these pages is to offer some practical remarks, which may tend to aid the inexperienced lover of bric-à-brac in his researches. Not for one moment, however, do I presume to call myself a first-rate judge. Many and many a blunder have I made ; and sorely have I paid for my apprenticeship. Often have I become the possessor of some piece of trumpery, which in my vanity I believed to be a priceless treasure. Indeed, I am satisfied that there are few connoisseurs living, whatever their knowledge or experience, who are not at times deceived—I do not say as to their judgment of beauty and outline or execution, but as to period and country. Beautiful as are

many of our specimens in the Kensington Museum, there is only one person connected with that institution—and I say so with no intentional discourtesy—in whom I should have great faith as a purchaser. Much that is good has been refused at moderate prices, and much that is mediocre obtained at heavy ones. Indeed the taste and knowledge of many of the leading dealers of London render them better judges than the best of amateurs. And this is only natural; for is it not their daily, nay hourly, business?—a business in which they hazard thousands, and from which they sometimes realize fortunes. Before starting on our first bric-à-brac quest, I would unhesitatingly say, that for all moderate specimens of ceramic art there is no place so cheap, be it where it may, as London; while in that city the highest price is obtainable for the finest specimens. In Paris, good, bad, and indifferent objects are all alike dear, unless that fickle goddess Fortune, who does at times befriend you, gives you a helping hand. But we will leave these great emporiums of bric-à-brac for the present, and take our first

trip eastward—not quite so far east as China or Japan, but to the Sublime Porte, where we will pass a pleasant morning in the Persian Bazaar, which, by the way, is by some termed the Arms Bazaar.

When, in my earliest boyhood, as I have already said, I was wont to fancy that all porcelain, of whatever kind, was the produce of China and Japan, I had, at least, some slight justification for my idea, since in those kingdoms it no doubt originated. Porcelain is an intermediate substance between pottery and glass,—more translucent than the one, more opaque than the other,—and is presumed to be of Chinese origin, its manufacture dating from so early a period as the beginning of the Christian era. Be this as it may, there is evidence of its use in the fifteenth century, and in the beginning of the fourteenth. The famous tower of porcelain at Nankin was built three hundred and thirty feet high, and still stands. It consists of nine stories of enamelled bricks or tiles, in five colours,—white, red, blue, green, and brown. Japanese china existed at almost as remote a

period, and was perhaps in all respects finer than Chinese; while in the days of Queen Anne and the first Georges china vases, dishes, and hideous monsters, were to be seen in all the houses of the rich in old England.

As I grew older, however, I learnt another lesson; and although I fully admit the rare beauty of many of the productions of China and Japan, both modern and ancient, and am aware that fine specimens still command high prices, I confess that European specimens are far more agreeable to my taste; and I fancy the Oriental china now in the market, which if gathered together would more than fill the Crystal Palace, or two Crystal Palaces, is no longer valued as it was wont to be. There was, indeed, a period when the china termed "crackles" was highly appreciated, and when specimens of that ware sold for more than their weight in silver. But now even the finest specimens appear to be of no great value; so capricious is taste, or fashion, or whatever you like to call that inconstant deity whose wand rules the desires of the world. It is not long since I ac-

quired a practical knowledge of this fact. Happening to have in my possession two small crackle vases, one green, the other yellow, and wishing to get rid of them, I took them to a dealer, expecting a large price for them. Judge my surprise when he offered me two pounds for my treasures, with the assurance that his profit would not be ten shillings; and I have had from subsequent experience no just reason to doubt him.

Indeed, a gallant friend of mine, who had been present at that which may be fairly termed the ransacking of the Palace of Pekin, informed me only recently that he had brought home some fine specimens of Japan and Oriental china, most of which he had sold in London for at least a third less than he could have obtained from the natives ere he left; and he added, "If all the specimens, good, bad, and indifferent, which now overburden the English market were returned from whence they came, they would sell for double the price to be obtained either in London or in any other of the European capitals. In fact, the natives are highly indignant that so much which is precious

to them should leave the country." Some of our largest collectors or dealers may act on this hint, if so minded. I place the suggestion unreservedly at their service.

Although it is my intention to dwell more largely on the subject of china—which is my peculiar taste—in subsequent pages, other articles of the fine arts, carved ivory, Venetian and Bohemian glass, enamels, wood-carvings, arms, and ancient jewelry, may all come fairly under the denomination of bric-à-brac.

CHAPTER III.

MARSEILLES AND MESSINA.

ONE ounce of practice is worth ten of theory, —at least so said some practical philosopher of olden time, and I fully agree with him.

We are at Marseilles. The getting there in the merry month of May, when vineyards and mulberry-trees put forth their early leaves, and almond-trees are in full bloom, is a pleasant and unfatiguing journey. Few, if any, are the railways in Europe by which one travels so smoothly or arrives with such punctuality as on the line between Paris and Marseilles. We leave the former city at 8 p.m., generally arriving at the latter on the following day at noon; so that little delay is allowed for gastronomy *en route*. A cup of *café-au-lait* at that city of democracy, Lyons—where the waiters go round the table for payment ere you have swallowed the first spoonful of your bever-

age—is all that you can expect till the journey ends; unless, indeed, you snatch up a slice of truffled pie during your three minutes' halt at Avignon,—a halt just long enough to make you regret that you cannot linger for a late breakfast at that unrivalled buffet, where the civility of the proprietor is only surpassed by the excellency of his supplies. The buffet of Avignon during the Crimean war was a buffet *par excellence*, and is so, I have reason to believe, in 1874, both going to and coming from Marseilles; but the Marseilles of to-day is no more the Marseilles of our grandfathers, nor indeed of our fathers, than is the Paris of The President the Paris of Napoleon III. Nevertheless there are few cities in Europe which, at all times and under all circumstances, present more stirring life. In this southern port men of all tongues and all nations throng together in commercial enterprise. The traveller is almost bewildered by the clamour of strange sounds; while dark and swarthy Saraccnic countenances remind him that he is approaching Oriental Europe.

The heights that rise above the city are clad

with the dark verdure of olives and pines, that seem to spring from a barren waste. Amid these sombre groves are scattered innumerable white-washed and green-shuttered "bastides," or villas, occupied by the Marseilles citizens. The town itself appears to repose at your feet, if indeed the word repose may be applied to that boiling, seething port; the outline of the coast being broken by a regular basin communicating by a narrow neck with the sea.

This basin produced the city. The Greeks of old found out its advantages, and their temples and shrines marked the inlet from the Mediterranean Sea. Old Marsalia flourished like new Marseilles. The harbour was and is its heart, the salt-water its life-blood. A strange and peculiar contrast is produced by the dusty gray of the houses and the deep blue of this inland basin of sea.

The ocean may be said to be in the very centre of the town; the buildings fence it in and encircle the harbour. It lies as if sleeping in this embrace—perhaps the one instance of a great city built in

a circle broken only by one small opening. Beyond, you behold rocky hills—hard, hot, glaring; parched in midsummer, in mid-winter bare, barren, and bleak. All round and about Marseilles they rise, all along the sea-coast you observe them glancing and flashing in the bright scorching air (not, however, entirely without verdure) sombre, unpleasing, and unrefreshing to the eye.

Yet if the land be dark, burnt, and barren, what a splendid contrast presents itself in the glorious ocean, whose liquid azure is so profound as to become almost imperial purple!

Descend once more into the city; observe the old harbour and the new. They were alike harbours and cesspools; all the drainings of the vastly-populated city originally poured into them, and filled the air with pestilence and disease. Such had been the case for ages; and as no tide stirs the Mediterranean, there the foul sewage lay and rotted and stagnated, and from thence its miasmatic vapours rose to spread fever and death.

No wonder, then, that cholera should so often have smitten the city with a strong and blighting

hand. Yet beyond these stagnant pestilential lakes the breeze comes dancing freely over the ocean—at times far too freely for those about to embark on its troubled waters—and the waves are as pure as salt-water waves can be.

Graceful feluccas skim over the waters, bending under their striped canvas, while steamers of all nations and ships-of-war are dotted over the sea. All is life, motion, and varied colouring. The forest of masts, the deep-blue sea, and the bright-blue sky, seen under favourable circumstances, form altogether a picture not easily forgotten.

Such was the Marsalia of yesterday ; such, in many respects, is the Marseilles of to-day. And yet, as in the case of Vienna or Paris, he that has not journeyed there for ten years past will find a new, ay and a splendid city risen on the foundations of the old. The Canébière is a noble street ; a grand cathedral rises day by day in vast proportions, probably now completed. The New Exchange or Bourse is a handsome pile ; and, best improvement of all, the sanitary state of the city is much amended and now well cared for. The

whole of the infectious substance, heretofore allowed to collect in the streets till it rotted, and was thence carried off by violent rains into the harbours, is now daily collected and removed to the country for agricultural purposes. A new harbour of considerable dimensions is completed; and the sewage, flowing through greatly-improved drains, is no longer allowed to pour itself into the harbours. For which blessed improvement the inhabitants may cheerfully pay and be thankful.

So much for this proud city, which bids fair to rival the chief commercial cities of Europe.

Is there a traveller who wanders to foreign lands for health, business, pleasure, or bric-à-brac hunting, who does not expect ease at his inn, and who, having swallowed and paid for a pound of grease or a quart of oil, and endured a brief martyrdom from dirt, vermin, and bad attendance, does not quarrel with his lot and the author of it, and mark with a double cross in his journal the entry which warns him to avoid the Blue Boar or L'Aigle d'Or, as the case may be, for the future?

I am no sybarite, yet I confess to a love for

comfort and cleanliness in my caravanserai. I am no *gourmet*, but I own that for perfect comfort I prefer an hotel where the chief cook is an artist. I may therefore as well remark that at Marseilles I should select for choice the Hôtel de Marseilles or the Petit Louvre. I know it is the fashion—alas, who leads the way that so many are wont to follow?—to select the Grand Hôtel de Paris or the Grand Hôtel du Louvre; but experience tells me that the grandeur generally exists only in the outward appearance of the house.

So, having ordered a moderate repast to satisfy the inner man at the Petit Louvre—giving strict orders for the exclusion of all provincial *plats*, for the inhabitants of the city are much given to garlic or oil, raw artichokes, and olives—let us walk forth to see the sights and visit the bric-à-brac shops.

As yet, though my visits to the commercial city have been frequent, I have only discovered four such shops at Marseilles. They are as follows: Esmeir, Rue Parcellis 22; Valli, Rue de Paradis 24; Pardieu, No. 43 in the same street; and Sondier, Rue Masquire. There is little to choose

between these dealers, though the two first are generally the best supplied. Their knowledge, however, of the art-gems they profess to sell is very mediocre, and their prices most exorbitant ; nevertheless, the very fact of their comparative ignorance is the best chance for the practical buyer, who thus, if the wind be in his favour, may chance to carry off something worthy his collection. And as for the price demanded—bah ! was there ever a correctly-judging bric-à-brac hunter who had not the courage to offer about one-half, say one-third, of that price ? or was there ever a seller who had the honesty to refuse the bid ? Of course I by no means include in these sweeping opinions the higher class of dealers, the sellers of first-class *objets d'art*.

With reference to those of Marseilles, I neither wish to be uncourteous nor unkind when I say they are by no means to be found in that society. The wherefore is easily explained. The Marseillais taste, among rich or poor, high or low, male or female, does not rank high ; in fact, the city is essentially democratic in taste as in politics. Pon-

derous furniture, modern pictures and modern china, big vases, much gilding, gorgeous colouring, an excessive gaudiness both in dress and decoration, with little art or beauty, prevail in that commercial hemisphere. The wealthy trader of Marseilles would pass by a lovely specimen of Wedgwood or Capo-di Monte, and purchase some modern abomination in French china highly decorated and gilded, to adorn his rooms; while his wife, if he have one, would select the most gorgeous silk and the brightest Persian shawl with which to bedeck her person. Thus it is not often that anything really worthy of being added to an amateur collection is to be secured in this city. It by no means follows, however, that gems are not occasionally met with here; and he who loves such acquisitions never neglects the smallest chance of a bargain. Nor should the collector on any account fail to explore the emporiums of Marseilles. I shall endeavour to explain the why and the wherefore.

Marseilles is essentially a thoroughfare to and from the East, as well as to Spain and Italy, by

the water-route, and hundreds are wise enough to know that art-treasures can be disposed of *en passant* there as elsewhere. Consequently various ceramic specimens do find their way into the hands of the dealers, from whom they pass onwards to Paris at a premium, not seldom being cheaply purchased and dearly sold. Now, if you can only stop a Capo di Monte group on its way from Italy, or a Bueno Retiro vase from Spain, or aught else, before it takes flight to the imperial city, which on more than one occasion it has been my good fortune to do, it will well repay you the trouble of an hour's visit to the bric-à-brac shops of the Rue de Paradis.

La Provence could formerly boast of several manufactures of pottery; but not till the end of the seventeenth century did it produce glazed or enamelled pottery, some time after that of Moustiers.

The first fabricant at Marseilles was Jean Delarisse, in 1769; whereas in the middle of the eighteenth century there were several artists, some of whom produced enamelled pottery.

Robert of Marseilles was another distinguished name. His works were first produced in 1793.

The widow Perrin, or Madame Perrin Veuve, as she was called, was, I believe, the last celebrated producer. Many specimens of her ware may still be found. They are generally marked with a monogram of the letters V. P. (Veuve Perrin), and are very interesting. During a recent hunt at Madrid with an Italian friend who holds deservedly a high rank in the diplomatic service of his country, and who has recently had a severe attack of the "bric-à-brac" fever, we discovered several extremely interesting plates in glazed pottery, all marked with the V. P., and evidently the production of Madame Perrin's factory. In the centre of each was a well-painted pastoral landscape of considerable beauty. I consequently brought one to England, and produced it to some connoisseurs and dealers. The former pronounced my plate an interesting specimen, but of little beauty; the latter scarcely understood it, and, looking on its marketable value, pronounced it not equal to a Bristol mustard-pot. So much

for the incurable fashion in this age of money-making. Nevertheless, I strongly urge on all lovers of bric-à-brac who may chance to find themselves at Marseilles, which, after all, seems to have derived its name from a ceramic treasure, never to neglect a raid when visiting that city.

MARSEILLES.

A certain king who had a daughter fair,—
An only child,—promised her that she
Should in her nuptial choice unfettered be ;
Wherefore, one morn he gave into her care
A costly china cup begemmed with jewels rare,
And said : “ This day a goodly company
Will hither come to seek thy hand, and he
To whom thou givest this cup shall be my heir.”
Knights, nobles, princes, thronged the bannered ground.
The blushing maiden cast her eyes around,
And chose a youth as yet unknown to fame,
Though born to greatness. He, to mark the spot
Where fortune gave for him so bright a lot,
There a city built—Marseilles its name.

And now, the weather being fine, and the sea calm, say in the latter end of May and early June, the trip by sail or steamer to Messina is not the most unpleasant undertaking in life ; moreover, it is of short duration. I am not aware as to whether the patriotism of Garibaldi ever moved him to collect the art treasures of the country he loves so

well ; but you get a view of his solitary mansion as you pass through the Straits of Bonifacio, perched as it is on a lonely and verdurous spot on the rocky island of Caprera, and possibly say to yourself, having recently strolled up Regent-street or the Boulevards, "Though I should die of *ennui* or go mad were my residence fixed here through the winter, during summer a yacht and books might make it endurable."

There is no doubt that the position of Messina is a lovely one, placed as it is in a mild and pleasant climate ; but it would be far more so if the city were backed with some glorious oaks, and the country around and about were overshadowed with such woodlands as old England alone can boast of. I dwell for a moment on the beauties of Nature, inasmuch as no real lover of art can be unmindful of those beauties, from which all that is precious in taste or design emanates. In fact, the study of art gives the mind a keener insight into Nature's charms, and teaches us to observe and appreciate them justly.

All therefore I desire to remark *en passant*, when

travelling to the East, in reference to Messina, is that it ever appears to me as the last spot *en route* on which a feeling of civilization rests, and, on returning, the first. It contains, however, a fountain of great beauty in the public square, which bad taste has somewhat destroyed by restoration. I had a photograph taken of it, with the intention of submitting it to Minton or at Miessen; as, modelled and produced in china, it would make an exquisite centre-piece for a dinner-table, either in china or silver.

Of bric-à-brac shops I have as yet never discovered one at Messina; still there is a gentleman who has had the good taste to be a collector of such gems as chance has brought to him from other lands. These he is courteously willing to show, and by no means unwilling to sell, to the stranger. I therefore feel the more fortunate in having made his acquaintance; and I suggest to all bric-à-brac hunters who may pass through Scylla and Charybdis to follow my example.

I owe him a debt of gratitude; but as he himself is entirely ignorant of the fact, I am by no

means called on to repay it, and shall only be too glad, should circumstances lead me once more to his abode, if he will do me a similar kindness, inasmuch as he sold me an exquisite Buen Retiro cup—saucerless, it is true—which was worth as many pounds sterling as I paid francs.

Finding myself on board one of the Messageries steamers *en route* to Marseilles, I made the acquaintance of an agreeable little French doctor of medicine, whose taste, if not experience, was similar to my own; and having suggested a raid on shore at Messina in search of anything in the ceramic line which might turn up, I fortunately introduced him to the “baron,” for such was the title our friend claimed. Whether he was a baron of the Roman empire, or a Sicilian noble, was of slight importance. He had pictures, such as they were,—Majolica, Grecian pottery, and some trifles in porcelain; all of which were at our service—for a consideration.

Having offered the usual courtesies which polite society dictates, I requested to be informed if he had any specimens of china to dispose of.

"Nothing but a few cups, signor," he replied ;
"here they are."

I forthwith selected four, three of little value. The fourth I at once knew to be a prize, it being a charming Buen Retiro cup, on which was an exquisitely painted battle-scene. Having demanded the price of the four—which being five francs each, I immediately paid without comment,—and then having looked round the rooms and thanked our host, we wished him good morning, as our vessel was about to sail. Ere leaving, however, I placed three of the cups carelessly in my coat-pockets, retaining the other carefully in my hand. No sooner was the street-door closed on us, than the little doctor exclaimed,

"*Parbleu, mon ami*, that appears to be a nice cup ; moreover, you take particular care of it. *Voulez-vous me le céder ?* I will give you ten francs for it."

"Not for a hundred," said I.

When on board I bade him carefully examine the painting with a magnifying glass ; and then he broke forth into French expressions very difficult

to translate, but which in English might mean, "By jingo, it is a beauty! How tenderly you handled it!" adding, "Why, I had it in my hand first; but as you made no remark, I fancied it was no better than those you put like oranges in your pockets."

"Precisely, doctor," I replied; "practice and experience give knowledge. When next you visit the baron, look sharper."

I had a little box made when on board, wrapped up my cup in cotton, consoled the doctor by presenting him with one of the others, and took it to England; where, as at Paris, it was valued at from five to six pounds. Thus, my friends, be advised, and never allow a chance to escape you when bric-à-brac hunting.

At Messina admirable figures in clay painted in the costumes of the peasantry may be obtained; they are correct and life-like, and can be purchased for a small outlay. The modern productions are certainly not equal to those of other days, still they are very interesting. I have recently seen two in the "bric-à-brac" shop of Mr. Acton, of

Richmond, belonging, I believe, to the Earl of Kilmorey. They are very good specimens, and it is possible that a Rambler over Sicily, if not attacked by brigands, would not only be agreeable, considering the beauty of the country, but might also be of great advantage to a bric-à-brac hunter.

CHAPTER IV.

STAMBOUL.

AND now let us steam onwards to the city of the Sultan.

Before the outbreak of the Crimean war, there was no lack of fine specimens of Oriental china in the bazaars at Constantinople; and here and there a good specimen of Sèvres, Dresden, Italian ware, and even specimens of Wedgwood and Worcester, might be secured. Meanwhile, among the multitude, military, naval, and civil, who then found themselves in that which at the period was an Eastern capital, but to-day has put on, forsooth, as far as the Frank portion is concerned, the very worst features of modern civilization, fast obliterating all the interest formerly derived from its Oriental character, there were naturally not only men with taste, and lovers of art, but also men with money without taste or

knowledge. Therefore were the bazaars ransacked, and good, bad, and indifferent specimens vanished day by day. Moreover, Turks, Armenians, Persians, and Jews had but one object in view—that of robbing the Giaours, as the officers of Her Majesty's army were called, to the utmost possible extent. And while on the one hand most if not all the buyers were more or less ignorant of the fact that, when asked a hundred piastres—which in some cases might not have been an exorbitant price for the object desired, and was therefore readily given—had they been wise enough to offer twenty-five, the sum would have been cheerfully accepted.

Again, the sellers were more less equally ignorant of the value of that which they sold. It was therefore by no means difficult, having knowledge and experience, every now and then to obtain a gem at a very reasonable—at times, indeed, ridiculously small—outlay. But a change soon came over the dream of both buyers and sellers. The buyers, at the suggestion of interpreters or commissioners,—who all acted in the spirit

of robbery, and stood the friend of either the one or the other, who paid most freely,—would not seldom offer twenty piastres where a hundred had been asked, which would be accepted; and so the sellers soon settled the matter by demanding double, conceiving, as they all did, that an Englishman was not made of flesh and blood, but of gold, and that pieces might be chipped off him as off stone. More: it soon got abroad that the Giaour would buy a tin pot for a sovereign if he were only told it was an ancient specimen from Damascus, or a china cup which he might have purchased in England for a shilling, if informed it was Dresden, or “Sax,” as they term it. And the market soon became glutted with the most inconceivable rubbish, much of which found its way back to England and France, whence it originally came, having meanwhile been purchased at a hundred per cent. more than its real value.

Long years have elapsed since those painful, yet at times merry days of war and love. And now, while the Sublime Porte has endeavoured to brighten its face with the varnish of civilization,

thus making it far more dirty than it was wont to be, the bazaars, with equal unsuccess, have in a great measure followed the European example. Let us pass a morning therein. If, however, you have not physical powers, patience, and temper, you had better remain at home, whether the season of your visit be winter or summer: for of all the fatiguing pleasures in life I know of, there are none equal to a day's bric-à-brac hunting in the bazaars of Constantinople. Moreover, in the present year, unless you are greatly favoured by fortune—or by luck, if you prefer to call it so—after all your patience, trials of temper, and fatigues, you may return home without a single addition to your collection.

Now the bazaar in the city of the Sultan, as in all other Eastern towns, as all the travelled world is aware, is simply that portion of the town set apart more particularly for the retail trade of every possible article of Eastern and European produce; and it is also more or less the habitation of those useful relations, termed in common parlance Uncles, or Israelites; kind friends who claim, by imaginary

blood, the right of lending you five shillings on a watch which cost you five pounds,—of course giving you a tolerably bad chance of redeeming it. It is also, to some extent, a *depôt* for the reception of stolen goods. No ; I will not be severe. I merely mean to say that if a pasha who has an overabundance of Dresden, or Eastern, or even Sèvres china, desires his attendant to dust it, two or three pieces may possibly be broken in the dusting, or said to be so, and sent to the bazaar to be mended, whence they never return to their rightful owner. I have not unfrequently been informed that there is a vast amount of ceramic treasure in the harems, as in the houses, of the rich pashas, much of which from time to time finds its way to the bazaar. Now, it is perfectly true that the amount of Sèvres coffee-cups, Dresden china, Oriental vases, and so forth, gathered together in the houses of the rich Turks, is probably immense, though for the most part modern, and of no particular value. And so, without fear of contradiction, I assert, that if the whole were placed before the eager gaze of a real connoisseur, he would not

among the lot select a score of objects worthy of consideration. I will tell you why it is so, my friends, whom I more particularly desire should be successful in those researches which I so much love. It is simply because, with very rare exceptions, the Eastern taste, like that of Marseilles, is vulgar and gorgeous in gold and colouring ; and I very much doubt if the Sultan—I beg his pardon, the light of the world—the grand vizier, the pasha with fifty tails, or the choicest beauties of their harems—are competent to judge, or care whether the gorgeous china that adorns their rooms, or the pretty jewelled cups from which they sip their coffee, or the dishes in which they dip their delicate hands, are made at Dresden, Pekin, Sèvres, or in England ; whether they be of hard paste or soft ; what marks they bear ; in what year they were produced ; or who the artist that decorated them. Indeed, a vast quantity of porcelain is made, and has been made, at Meissen, Vienna, and elsewhere, purposely for the Eastern markets, which is marked, truly, but of particular forms, for particular purposes, to contain meats, vege-

tables, and sweetmeats; and this is immediately known to an experienced hunter, and rarely found elsewhere. It is true that here and there a fine specimen may be secured, and of such it has been my good fortune to collect a few. Generally speaking, however, the painting is coarse, the forms neither artistic nor tasteful, and of little value to those who look for beauty of decoration, chasteness in outline, and delicacy of execution.

In bidding adieu to the Eastern capital, I by no means recommend a visit to the bazaar, if merely in pursuit of ceramic treasures. I have, it is true, from time to time picked up a piece of Worcester, Wedgwood, and Dresden, at moderate prices; no doubt brought to Constantinople in other days by an ambassador, consul-general, or some English merchant; but little now remains, and for such as there is to be found, the price asked is double that for which the same objects may be purchased in London. The fashion for collecting bric-à-brac without practice or knowledge has caused this. No sooner does an Englishman present himself in the bazaars than he is pounced upon by a host

of greedy, unsavoury-smelling interpreters, who vie with one another in the endeavour to pillage him, and who generally succeed. Now, the readers of these pages must permit me to introduce them to Mr. Zenope, in the Grand Bazaar, a most respectable Armenian. If you visit Stamboul, porcelain-loving reader, go direct to him, place yourself unreservedly in his hands, decline all other assistance, and I, after many years' experience, will answer for his honesty and probity.

Meanwhile permit me to remark that scarcely any physical undertaking is more fatiguing than that of passing a day of research in the bazaars of Stamboul, particularly if you are not so fortunate as to find aught that is satisfactory.

The mode and manner of Oriental dealing is wide apart from that which may be simply termed European buying and selling. In London, Paris, or Vienna, you enter a bric-à-brac shop; its contents are, generally speaking, clear to the eye; you select that which appears to be desirable, ask the price, make your offer, purchase or refuse, and go your way. I must confess I should scarcely

have the courage to act in London as I should unquestionably be disposed to do either at Paris or Vienna, or indeed any other Continental capital or town, namely, offer about half or a third the price asked. But all such delicate ideas may be banished in the bazaars at Constantinople, with the assurance that you will obtain nothing, great or small, on which some profit has not been secured to the sellers.

Having paid your respects to Zenope, accepted a cup of Turkish coffee or a glass of lemonade, according to season and inclination, smoked a cheroot or cigarette—if given to cigarettes, to which all the Frank inhabitants incline—proceed to that portion of the bazaars entitled the Arms Bazaar. It is dark, gloomy, not to say dirty, to the eye, and unsavoury to the nose, but curious and picturesque in the extreme.

You approach the shop, if it may so be called, of a bric-à-brac merchant. He is possibly engaged with some other customer, or smoking his pipe, or munching a cucumber, or counting his beads, and takes no more notice of you than if you were one

of the dogs that lie sleeping in the streets of Stamboul. Patience is said to be a virtue—prove that you possess it if you can, and bring all your good-temper to aid you. Being in a hurry will not assist you in the slightest degree. If the dealer's tongue be unknown to you, appeal calmly for the aid of your interpreter, and arouse the old gentleman from his lethargy as you would stir up a sleepy animal in Wombwell's menagerie.

You see, or fancy you see, high on the shelf above him, a choice piece of china, or any other article of bric-à-brac, which might possibly suit you; and as it is in all probability covered with dust, and beyond your reach, you civilly request to be permitted to handle it prior to the investment of your money. In answer to your request, the merchant casts his expressive eyes towards the roof of the bazaar, and gives a kind of cluck with his throat, which means that the object is either broken or already sold, or that in his opinion it will not please you. The fact of the matter is, the weather is hot, and moving is unpleasant. Being, however, desirous to judge for yourself, you again

politely rouse his Excellency, who at length uncrosses his legs, raises himself from his sitting position, and does you the favour to allow you to examine the goods he is there to sell, with the air of a man who is doing you an honour. We will say that you take a fancy to some object amongst his wares. Then comes the bargaining. Alas, this is a diplomatic process almost beyond European endurance. "Ask him the price," you say to your interpreter. The free-and-easy merchant chumps his cucumber or smokes his pipe, as he calmly replies, "Two hundred piastres." "Two hundred piastres! Why, I could buy it in Vienna for fifty!" you exclaim. "No doubt, sir," says the disinterested interpreter; "but you are in Stamboul, not in Vienna." And so you move on, and, nine times out of ten, are called back, and possibly end by making the purchase for about a quarter the price first named. And so is it throughout the bazaars.

Turks are neither an energetic nor an inventive people; neither are they gifted with taste for, or love of, the fine arts. I should scarcely imagine

that a hundred subjects of the Light of the World could distinguish a Murillo from a signboard, or a Sèvres vase from a flower-pot. Nevertheless there was a porcelain manufactory formerly on the banks of the Bosphorus, the property, I fancy, of foreigners. I do not suppose, however, that it succeeded in achieving much beyond a teapot or washhand-basin, though I possess a small vase that is said to be Turkish manufacture, not ungraceful. And yet I know of no country on which the sun shines that possesses such abundance of admirable material for the manufacturing of pottery and porcelain. Had poor Palissy lived in the East, what marvels of art he would have produced ! But the art of Turkey scarcely soars above a gilded pipe-bowl.

It is some years since this chapter was written, since which a great improvement has taken place in all things in and about the City of the Sultan in so far as civilization is concerned. If so be, it has lost much of its Oriental character. Good roads have been made to Therapia and Buyukdere, the summer resorts of diplomacy and commercial wealth ; gas-lamps have also been introduced ; and

there is no longer any fear of falling into the Bosphorus, should you be invited to dine at one of the ambassadorial mansions. Moreover, Therapia and Buyukdere are charming retreats during summer and autumn from the hot, ill-paved, and dirty streets of the City of the Sultan.

CHAPTER V.

MADRID.

"Quien dice Espagna dice toto."

"NO hay sino un Madrid" (There is but one Madrid). There is but one stage from Madrid to Paradise, in which there is a window for angels to look down on the counterpart of heaven on earth. So say all Spaniards. Alas! these angels never descend into the capital. Have you ever been there? No. Well, the month is late spring, the sky blue, the sea calm and purple; so let us start—say from Marseilles; cross the oft-times troubled waters of the Gulf of Lyons, now like a mirror; touch at Barcelona, though I never yet saw or cracked a nut there; halt at Alicant; and travel south by railway through La Manca, mentally in company with Don Quixote and Sancho, to the capital of her most Catholic Majesty or El Corte. Though it is at times the hottest, and at others the coldest climate in southern Europe—indeed,

it is proverbially asserted that "*el aire de Madrid es tan sutil, que mata á un hombre, y no apaga á un candil*," which, being translated, simply means that the summer air which will not extinguish a candle puts out a man's life—it is nevertheless by no means an indifferent abiding-place for a time for the bric-à-brac hunter, or any one else.

The position of Madrid is unique; it may be fairly said, in the middle of a desert. All the great capitals of Europe denote as it were their position, and are announced to the traveller by their populated environs, which bespeak the vitality of the city.

Madrid, on the contrary, is like a planet lost in space, which shines without lighting you; without wood; till recently, without water; without stone; without an industrious population; without commerce, save that which supplies its luxuries.

Madrid, when first approached, gives you the idea of effect without cause—a sort of royal caprice unaided by nature; in other days it was simply a fortified burgh, which, nevertheless, could

boast the honour of being besieged by the Cid. King Philip the Second proclaimed it the seat of government, and a rendezvous for sport. Alas ! there is little in those we live in.

He desired to make it a city ; it has never been anything but a Court, from which it has derived the only influence which brings great cities to life.

After having passed, we will say, a week in the Museo, with which time, if you are a lover of high art, you will still scarcely be satisfied, so exceedingly rich is the place in treasures—a palace, in fact, of thought and beauty, filled with spirits of past days, where the dead reappear as in visions of delight ;—as a refreshment for your taxed energies, seek the walks of the Retiro gardens, near which was the celebrated “ La China,” or royal porcelain manufactory, founded by Charles III. in 1759, who brought workmen from his similar factory at Capo di Monte, Naples. Everything was destroyed by the French, and the place converted into a fortification, which surrendered with 200 cannon, on the 14th August, 1812,

to the Iron Duke. It was subsequently blown up by Lord Hill, when the misconduct, or perfidy, or whatever you like to call it, of Ballestros compelled him to evacuate Madrid. Since which time, to the day in which we live and hunt for specimens of Bueno Retiro, one of the standing calumnies against us—so often repeated, and still credited by young Spain, although more than half a century has elapsed—is that all the finest specimens were destroyed by the English from mere jealousy. Whereas the real truth is that the fathers, or grandfathers, of our gallant allies of to-day scarcely recollect what they did yesterday—they broke the Ollas themselves, and converted the manufactory into a Bastille, which, and not the pipkins, we did destroy. So little did we dread Spanish competition, which might well be dreaded if Spain could produce, in 1875, such specimens as those once issued from “La China,” that we have actually introduced their system; and very fair china is now produced at Madrid, made for the most part by English workmen.

Ferdinand VII., on his restoration, re-created

"La China," removing the workshops and ware-rooms to La Mondoa; but this has also ceased to exist—at least as regards high art.

On my first visit to Madrid—or La Corte, as it was generally termed by Spaniards, as if there were no other court in Europe save that of the Spanish Paradise or La Gloria—I own my heart beat with fond anticipation of the numberless specimens of *Bueno Retiro china* I should carry homeward. But, alas, such was my ignorance of this extremely rare and beautiful porcelain, that all my researches were more or less in vain. I obtained little or nothing worthy to be purchased; and with the exception of a few very moderate and imperfect specimens, I have never been enabled to secure anything of great beauty. In fact, the only group of real value that I then cast my eyes on at Madrid was a centre-piece on the English minister's table, which, when hungry, one hardly thanked him for exhibiting; for while, on the one hand, it created envy and jealousy, on the other, the impossibility of keeping one's longing eyes from it prevented due attention to his gastronomic hospitality.

In other days there were three very indifferent bric-à-brac shops at Madrid. One was more or less a private collection, though everything was for sale that was gathered together by Don Hosez, landlord of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, the only decent hotel both as regards charges and comfort I ever recollect at Madrid. Don Hosez's establishment was opposite the British Legation, in the ancient palace or judgment-hall of the Inquisition. But both Don Hosez and his hotel have ceased to exist, and happily the Inquisition also. The house afterwards became the residence of the French ambassador, and Don Hosez's collection has since been scattered far and wide. From him I chanced to get a few pieces of Spanish pottery and porcelain of little value. One of the other shops appears also to have vanished; and on my last visit to La Corte, I only discovered the third in the Calle Alcaza, where little is to be obtained, save an occasional sword, and various heavy and by no means choice specimens of mediæval furniture.

Some years ago, when strolling leisurely one

intensely hot evening in August along the Calle Alcaza, the very best if not the principal street of Madrid, I chanced to see some curious cups in the window of the shop in question. After examining them, and asking their value, I suggested to the owner, that, as it was late and my dinner awaited me, if he would send them to my hotel on the following morning, I would make him an offer. To this he agreed, and expressed a desire to show me a handsome china *déjeuner* then in his possession. "It is late and getting dark," said I; nevertheless I could not resist a peep; and so after traversing several dark passages, we entered a room filled with ancient dusty furniture, when a cupboard being unlocked, he produced therefrom a large brass-bound box, which contained, as he had said, a *déjeuner* of the most lovely modern Sèvres it has ever been my good fortune to behold. Having taken one of the pieces in my hand and examined the mark, I carelessly asked the price, which being named I found far beyond my means and intentions. Nevertheless the owner appeared extremely anxious to part with it; and as I bade

him good evening, he urged me to come again by daylight. "Well," I replied, "it is very beautiful, though quite modern; moreover, if it were not so, your price is at least two-thirds beyond what I should be disposed to give." "Maybe; but the signor will at all events call to-morrow?" Possibly," said I. And so we parted, not, however, without a lingering desire on my part to possess the *déjeuner*, however small the hope. I felt, besides, an intense curiosity as to how he had obtained it; for it was far too costly to have come, as I supposed, honestly into the hands of him who claimed it.

On the following morning a Signorina, somewhat fat and certainly over forty, accompanied by a lad, called on me with the few specimens I had selected, which, after a little bargaining, became my property; and she then urged on me to take another look at the Sèvres, which I agreed to do, appointing three o'clock as the time of my visit. On my arrival, having passed along the same dark passages, which were divided by doors, the china was again placed before me,

and there being a much brighter light, it appeared still more beautiful than on the previous evening. In the room at the time there were two women and the lad who had brought my china in the morning. Having again questioned her as to the price, &c., I told the good woman who appeared to take the lead, that I did not want the china (which was an innocent fib), that it was far beyond my means; but, said I, in an off-hand manner, "as you appear most anxious to part with it, I will tell you what I will do—I will give you forty sovereigns, or fifty napoleons in gold;" gold being then somewhat scarce at Madrid. Now my offer was received with great good humour, but neither accepted nor refused—in fact, made half in joke, half in earnest, more than £200 having been demanded. I then began to look at some old swords which lay dusty in a corner of the apartment; when all of a sudden the door flew open, and in rushed two of the most disagreeable-looking vagabonds I ever beheld. Drawing, as if by impulse, the sword I held in my hand from the scabbard,

the Spanish proverb occurred to me,—“*No me saques sin razon ; no me envaines sino honor ;*” which simply means, Do not draw me without cause, or sheath me without honour ; and dropping the point, I stood with my back to the corner from whence I had taken it, awaiting the next move—not, however, very calmly, for the day was intensely hot, and it occurred to me that I had got into a den of thieves. Moreover, an angry Spaniard is not always particular whether he sticks you in the back or the front. But what did it all mean? The two men appeared to be terribly excited, and the angry discussion in *patois* which took place was far beyond my comprehension, though I and the box of china were evidently the subjects of discussion. My position, I must admit, was not the pleasantest in life. At last, a temporary pause taking place, I demanded the cause of this inconceivable outbreak. “We were behind the door,” said one man, “and we heard you offer fifty sovereigns for the china.” “You are in error,” said I; “I offered fifty napoleons. Nevertheless,

if you will bring it to my hotel, I will give you fifty sovereigns,"—glad to escape by any means from my disagreeable position; "I do not carry so much gold in my pocket."

On this another boisterous conversation took place, the box and its contents being eventually hoisted on one of the men's shoulders; and I hailed the fact as the advent of my release and possession of the china. But, alas, nothing of the kind. I was detained another half-hour—a prisoner in fact. Happily my release came at last in the person of a well-dressed gentleman, who had doubtless been sent for, and who evidently had a perfect knowledge of my gaolers, and also of the china I was desirous to purchase. Having at length gained the street, I addressed my companion, courteously demanding whom I had the honour to thank for my release, what was his connection with the parties by whom I had been insulted—in fact, I requested to be enlightened as to the whole affair.

Thus spoke the mighty hidalgo, having first informed me he was a Spanish nobleman :

"You ought not to trust yourself in such places."

"Trust myself in such places!" I replied; "a bric-à-brac shop in the principal street and thoroughfare of Madrid?"

"You are not in England, signor," he replied.

"There is no question as to that," I said; "meanwhile I thank you for coming to my aid, whether intentionally or by chance. I am ignorant of your knowledge of these people, and equally so of your connection in reference to the china they so eagerly desire to sell. But in case you have any interest in the matter, you will place me under further obligations by telling them most distinctly, that if they bring the china in question to my hotel by twelve o'clock to-morrow, I will give them £40; if the clock strikes the quarter-past, and no one appears, I shall instantly lay the whole matter before the English minister, demanding compensation for being forcibly detained, and the punishment of its authors." And taking off my hat, I wished his excellency good morning.

As the hour of twelve sounded throughout the

city, on the following day, the box and its contents, in perfect preservation, were placed in my room. I paid a thousand francs, and on the same night it formed a portion of my belongings *en route* to Paris. With a cup in my pocket I visited Sèvres, where I ascertained that this beautiful specimen of modern Sèvres had been sent by King Louis Philippe as a present to her most Catholic Majesty of Spain on her marriage. Of course I have here only given an outline of the facts as they occurred; and having no desire to injure or question the honesty of others, I will endeavour to forget all the curious details of the affair since come to my knowledge, save that if I became the possessor of a beautiful Sèvres *déjeuner*, I did so by fair means and payment, and at considerable personal discomfort.

There is now very little to be done by the bric-à-brac hunter in Madrid; and yet there surely must be some magnificent specimens of Bueno Retiro and other specimens of Spanish china scattered about the principal towns and cities of Spain in private houses, though it has never

yet been my good fortune to meet with any. In the Queen's Palace at La Granja, the whole sides of a boudoir are decorated with "Bueno Retiro" china; and I am convinced that a run through the interior of Spain would repay the bric-à-brac hunter. Of historical swords, the finest collection in the world may be seen in the Armoria at Madrid, many of them having mottoes similar to the one I have quoted in a previous page, indicative of the fine old cavalier spirit which once existed in Spain, and which I am not prepared to say does not still exist.

With all its drawbacks, Madrid during the cool season is by no means an unenjoyable *séjour* for a brief period, notwithstanding the proofs of a certain disregard of the comforts and decencies of life, laxity of police rule and discipline everywhere distinguished. But these are only "Cosas di Espagna."

The three faces of the clock over the Home Office at the Puerta del Sol hardly ever agree as to the hour. This phenomenon may be fairly taken as an emblem of the whole political, social, and moral condition of the country. Alas, poor

Spain ! with all your natural charms, you possess many vices and innumerable humbugs. Should you fall, which is not improbable or impossible—for the glass of your prosperity sinks fast—I trust in the scramble some of your “Bueno Retiro” china may fall into my hands ; I will be careful that it is not broken.

Now as regards other portions of this book, the chapter on Madrid was written some years lang syne ; since that era, the changes as regards this country—rich and beautiful as made by God, miserable as made by man—have been rapid. Queens have been dethroned ; Governments continually upset ; railways which connected the capital rapidly with Paris and the sea-boards destroyed ; and at the moment I write this the only available means of reaching Madrid appears to be in wretched steamboats over the most dangerous sea in Europe, either from Bayonne or Succoa to Santander, and thence by a miserably slow and uncertain railway to Madrid,—a journey, in fact, of great fatigue and delay, not unattended with danger. I know not for which of my sins, but it has so

occurred during the year past that I have been called on several occasions to the Serano city, and then and there I found out my error as regards bric-à-brac hunting.

It is possible that during the brief time I had previously remained there I had become ill-acquainted with the riches it contained. My eyes have recently been opened to the fact; but, alas! somewhat too late to take advantage thereof. Whether the civil war has been the cause of pecuniary requirements, I know not; but quantities of Chelsea, Dresden, and other valuable specimens of English china, within the last four years, have found their way into the hands of dealers at Madrid and been bought up at very moderate prices, previous to the railways being destroyed. But, alas! those *beaux jours sont passés*. Collectors and their agents then crossed the Pyrenees, and now even a broken group of Chelsea or anything worth having is ridiculous as to price. Whether all the treasures which have been sold came from the rural districts or how obtained, I know not, but some still remain for those who have the means to secure them.

Count Valentia, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making, has a splendid collection of early and I may say unequalled "Bueno Retiro."

And Madame Riano, well known in English society, has first-rate specimens of Chelsea and other English china, and Spanish glass of great antiquity, all collected in Spain.

And the courtesy and kindness of the Count, as also Madame Riano, induces them always to open their collections to lovers of Ceramic art.

There are also numberless fine specimens of partially glazed Moorish plates and dishes; but these, like all else, have quadrupled in price.

Last, certainly not the least interesting in Spanish china, is Alcora, marked with an A, and little known or esteemed, I fancy, in England; nevertheless many of the specimens, particularly figures, are well modelled and painted. Those with a golden A are fine and scarce. This Fabric was established in 1727 by the Count Arauda, once Spanish ambassador in Paris, a great friend of Voltaire's, to whom he made a present of a complete set of this china.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. PETERSBURG.

I CANNOT say that I sat me down on the banks of the Neva and wept. With my pipe in my mouth I reclined in an easy arm-chair on a balcony which overlooked that wide and flowing river, and pictured to my mind what it must be in mid-winter, when that blue and rushing expanse of water is converted into a broad and ice-bound high-road ; in which state it has been my lot so very many times since to behold it. And here permit me to remark that every chapter of my bric-à-brac wanderings is written in the actual place, often on the very spot of which I speak.

There was a time, which appears but yesterday, so few the years—I might say the months—which have elapsed, when he who desired to visit the city of the Czars had occasion to brace up his nerves and to call alike on his physical powers and his patience ; for the journey by land from

the Prussian frontier, whether in midsummer or in midwinter, was one of intolerable fatigue and discomfort, the only choice of evils being between death from intense cold, and suffocation from intense heat, without one spot of interest or beauty to vary the monotony of the way. If railway travelling, however, be not to the majority, as it is to me, more fatiguing than posting, matters are greatly improved ; for justice and truth compel me to admit that Russian railways, if they are slow and constantly on the halt—more for the benefit of the owners of the buffets than the convenience or gastronomic indulgence of travellers—are replete with comfort ; more so, indeed, than those of any other nation in which it has been my good or evil fortune to journey. But here we are in that vast capital, where the magnificent statue of its founder, the great Peter, turns his horse's tail towards the colossal gilded dome of St. Isaac's, a mighty edifice, built, at the cost of millions, on a foundation of piles, which the public voice declares already to be sinking. However, as regards Petersburg, and its palaces, and museums,

and monasteries, I must refer my readers to other pages; I invite them to take a walk, provided they are in good physical condition, in search of bric-à-brac. The exchange, an event of rare occurrence, was at nine roubles the pound sterling at the moment I wrote these lines; now, I believe, only seven; so that, in spite of the absurd price generally asked for articles, good, bad, and indifferent, we may chance to make a few good bargains.

Ten years since, in the days when Russian railways were not, and upsets in snowstorms were as common as telegrams, the capital of All the Russias was—I mean no pun—a capital place for bric-à-brac; and here and there is still to be found much that is worthy of the collector's researches. But, alas! at St. Petersburg, as elsewhere, that which might once have been secured for a rouble is now difficult to obtain for a pound. I suggest to the connoisseur who first visits the city of the Czars to select some friend, if he has one, who speaks the language—in default of a friend, pay an interpreter—and then drive to the porcelain manufactory, situated about four versts (or three

miles) from the city. I do not say the drive is a pleasant one, far from it; but without trouble, and the exercise of patience and endurance, there is seldom much to be gained. So submit cheerfully to be bumped for two versts over an ill-paved city, and to be rebumped for two more over the vilest of roads. Even should you require a sheet of diachylon plaster on your return, you will neither regret the pain nor the outlay.

The manufactory in question, which commenced under the auspices of Catharine, has existed for more than a century, and is still under the protection of the empire. In other days, previous to the reduction of duties on foreign importations, which now fill the market, it did a thriving home trade. Even now, I cannot speak too highly either of the workmen or the work produced in the factory. True, there is little originality of taste or design; but the copies, particularly those of figures and groups, taken from the models of Dresden, Berlin, and elsewhere, are equal to, and in some measure more accurate and life-like, as well as more delicate in outline and effect, than

those produced in later days either at Meissen or the royal manufactory of the latter city, and infinitely cheaper. For the most part they are uncoloured; but the glaze is very clear and smooth; and I have been fortunate enough to obtain some specimens worthy of, and equal to, any of the productions in Europe. The painting—generally, I fancy, the work of German artists—is equally beautiful; and some vases and *déjeûners* sent to the Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862 in England, and which were unfortunately returned in some measure broken, were magnificent specimens of the ceramic art. A little more originality—figures and forms possessing more nationality of character—is all that is wanting to enable the produce of the Russian imperial factory to vie with the ceramic *chefs-d'œuvre* of present and past ages.

There are few of what may be fairly termed bric-à-brac shops in Petersburg,—in fact, the only two I know of, where *objets d'art*, as they are termed, may be found, and to which I can recommend a visit with the hope of any successful result, are those of Messrs. Negri and G. Tognolati;

the former on the Nevsky Prospect, the latter at No. 39, Kameney Ostrowskey Prospect. Mr. Negri is a most obliging, agreeable person to deal with; and I must do him the justice to say that I have on more than one occasion purchased from him some exquisite Wedgwood medallions, as also some small but choice specimens of Sèvres, Vienna, and Berlin china, at a very reasonable outlay. Mr. Tognolati, an Italian,—who has recently left the city for what may be termed the immediate environs, and combines his dealings in *objets d'art* with the fabrication of macaroni, in both of which pursuits, to all appearance, he is successful,—has also occasionally some fine specimens of carved furniture, and is always ready and obliging in showing what he has to the stranger, even should no purchases be made. He looks for rather higher gains than Mr. Negri. A packet of paper roubles will not go far with either gentleman, however.

But though Negri's and Tognolati's are the only bric-à-brac shops of which I have any practical knowledge, there is a vast field for the hunter alike in Petersburg and Moscow, though it has never as

yet been my good fortune to visit the latter city. But in order to avoid the beaten track of dealers, it is necessary to get introductions to private houses in company with some one who knows the language well. In such case your hunting-field is full, or rather was full, of game ; and courtesy of manner, combined with attention, may then enable you, without offence, to be a purchaser, though the seller be not exactly a dealer. In this manner, some years since, I became the possessor of two of the finest Wedgwood vases of their kind I have ever seen, and which, being then in my apprenticeship, I subsequently sold for about a sixth of their worth to a friend who had a valuable collection of that beautiful ware. This was one of the lessons I learnt ; from that time a Wedgwood vase has risen a hundred per cent. in my estimation. It is almost inconceivable what a vast quantity of Wedgwood found its way to the city of the Czars. Doubtless very much still remains, if it could be discovered, though much of it may not exactly be for sale. Sèvres, however, of the finest quality and period, Dresden and Berlin and Viennese

porcelain, still remains in great quantities. The palaces are full of it. The museum has some lovely specimens ; and the active and energetic hunters, with time, means, and experience, still do so much, that I believe the first-class dealers of Bond Street, such as Messrs. Joseph Davis, and others, are wont to endure a journey to St. Petersburg, if not annually, at no very long intervals, in search of treasures ; and, if report speak truly, they never return without some valuable acquisitions both from the capital and from Moscow.

I possess the adventurous hunter-spirit, and always decide on chasing my game home wherever to be found, whether in the woods and broad lands of my fatherland, or on foreign shores. In like manner, I never allow a chance to escape me when in search of bric-à-brac, always bearing in mind that, whether in the humblest shop or in the most magnificent repository of *objets d'art*, something may be discovered, oftentimes more successfully in the former than the latter. On these grounds I unhesitatingly accepted the suggestion of a friend who proposed to take me to the private residence

of a Circassian lady, who had a small but choice collection which she was courteous enough to show to her friends, and with which, of course, she had no desire to part. Nevertheless, like all other collectors, after some trifling fencing and interchanging of courtesies, it appeared that she had no objection to dispose of her treasures in a dear market, she having purchased them in a cheap one. Introductions over, a glance around the room—which was sufficiently spacious, but, like most Russian houses, lightly furnished, with here and there a gorgeous highly-gilded arm-chair or sofa, and with little apparent comfort—I cast my longing eyes on some ceramic treasures with which a cabinet was filled, and we commenced business. Meanwhile I had truly been informed that my hostess was not a dealer. Looking on her with a practical eye, her portrait may be thus drawn: age about seventy; rather sharp and prominent features; the remnant of what might have been teeth; a tongue which surpassed any tongue (pardon me, ladies!) that I had ever previously listened to, so excessive was its volubility. The

weather was hot, and her costume appeared to me to consist simply of a somewhat dirty cotton dressing-gown. How was I, then, a stranger in Russia, seeking to secure some Sèvres cups, to know with whom I had the honour of discussing the merits and value of her ceramic treasures? So, silently I examined and appraised those set before my longing eyes, wondering how the lady, as I had been told she was, should have had such good taste and knowledge as to gather them together, and such bad taste as to present herself in that dirty and discoloured dress in the presence of visitors. Here and there I selected some choice specimen which I was desirous to purchase, but which, for the most part, she declined to sell. At length, wearied by her continued refusals and constant chatter, I seized two charming cups, and, without further comment, placed golden sovereigns by their side. She clutched the coins, and I thought the battle won: but then appealing to my companion in the Russian tongue (unknown to me) she replaced the money on the table. "You must give another half-sovereign," said he,

smiling. Anxious to have the treasures, which were really very beautiful, I gave the required addition, and forthwith the sovereigns descended to some hidden pocket in the cotton dressing-gown. The cups were mine. My friend also obtained a cup; and after innumerable shakings of hands, bows, and adieux, we parted, not without expressions on the lady's part to the effect that she hoped we should repeat our visit at some future time.

No sooner were we on our drosky than my companion burst into fits of laughter.

"What's the joke?" I inquired.

"Joke? Why, your consummate coolness with the old lady."

"Lady?" I replied.

"Yes," said he; "a Circassian princess; and her son, who was so anxious to sell that vase which she refused, a Circassian prince."

"Well," said I, "we parted on the most amicable terms, and, princess or no princess, she is the hardest hand at a bargain, and has the most lively tongue, I ever had the honour to encounter."

I have sketched this little matutinal farce simply

to remark that there are a variety of Circassian or other princesses in Petersburg equally desirous of fair barter ; and, time and opportunity presenting themselves, I have no doubt that the field for the bric-à-brac hunter is vast and full of treasures.

But there is another and most interesting locale to which I have not yet alluded. I must describe it in detail. It is termed "Vshyvio-Rynok," or in plain English, the "Louse Market."

During the year 1862 the whole of this immense market was destroyed by fire. The tremendous conflagration may be readily conceived when I state that the place was entirely composed of wooden buildings, for the most part filled with combustible matter, ranging from valuable pictures and furniture to old rags, tar, oil, and pitch. The fire commenced at 4 P.M., and was burning till the midday following. During this tremendous fire property of all kinds was ruthlessly cast into a canal ; thus books, china, pictures, silk, eastern shawls, and objects of untold value, were destroyed and lost for ever ; and what had been one of the richest and most interesting places of the city was

in a few hours converted into one vast smoking heap of ashes. It was, indeed, a perfect wreck. Here and there casks of nails, pots, pans, and copper zamovars, or Russian tea-urns, were all melted up together; in another part, where crockery and china merchants had exhibited their wares, plates and dishes by the dozen were consumed *en masse*, so intense was the heat. A portion of one dozen I have now in my possession. It was, indeed, a sad scene of ruin and destruction. Scarcely anything was saved. Splendid Sèvres, Dresden clocks of great value, and bric-à-brac collected for years in every mart in Europe and the East, jewels, Cashmere shawls, Lyons silk—all one heap of ashes.

The original market—which was as old as the city—was, in fact, simply a bazaar of great extent, in which were exhibited for sale articles from the world at large, and in which every purchaser, from the highest to the lowest, could suit himself on reasonable terms.

Although much fair dealing doubtless takes place there, I will by no means answer for the

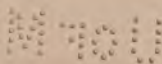
fortunes that were and are dishonestly made. In Russia it is possible that stolen goods may be received from a thief with impunity. At all events I have witnessed the purchase by a dealer of a choice article of china for a few roubles, which I have almost immediately secured for double the sum paid, with the knowledge that I still became the owner cheaply. It was not for me to inquire from whence or whither it came, but the appearance of the vendor, who gladly received the trifle given for it, convinced me it was no heirloom.

Hours have I passed with much interest and amusement in the old as the modern market, bracing my nerves against the severity of a Russian winter's day, or overcome by the heat of summer; but when does the keen hunter give up his game, whatsoever may be the element he has to contend with? And as regards these markets or bazaars, if such they may be called, there is little difference, save that articles of real value day by day become more scarce, and their price greatly augmented both to buyer and seller. No doubt but that many precious objects of Sèvres, Wedgwood,



Dresden, and Vienna porcelain, of unmistakable beauty and age, and bearing pure marks, still find their way into the dealers' hands for a few roubles, and are sold for hundreds; how obtained, I will not venture to assert; and neither the buyers nor the sellers give themselves any trouble to ascertain. However, the old saying, "I got this or that for nothing," is no longer heard; and whenever a beautiful unbroken group, or a rare cup and saucer is met with, lucky the hunter who obtains it at any reasonable price. There was a time not long ago, say about the year 1859, when I had the good fortune to become the possessor of two Wedgwood vases of extreme beauty, and several plaques of unrivalled chasteness, for a price for which scarcely one, even if found, could now be purchased. My knowledge of the value of these lovely specimens was then very far from being that which experience and constant practice have since given me.

I will close these recollections of my hunting days in the city of the Czars with a trifling anecdote, only indirectly connected with Petersburg,



it is true, but which will not be without interest to those for whom these pages are more particularly written.

Being in Naples many years since, among numerous other articles of bric-à-brac, I became the possessor of a specimen, which, though greatly in doubt, I had much reason to believe was a Palissy dish. My belief in its genuineness arose from the fact of its great similarity to a dish I had previously seen in a first-rate collection, and from my knowledge of its having been many years in the possession of a highly respectable Neapolitan family; on the other hand, doubts were suggested to my mind by its extreme beauty and brightness of colouring, the remarkable clearness and admirable representation of the shell-fish and fern-flowers with which it was adorned, and by the delicacy of its outline, which is not always characteristic of the old specimens of that remarkable labourer in the field of ceramic art. Moreover, the price for which I obtained it was about the tenth part of its value if it had really been formed by the artistic hands of Palissy. It

was very beautiful, however, in any case, and with care and pride I carried it to my cottage home in England.

By very many it was admired, and though doubtful of its genuineness, I day by day looked on it with increasing delight. But alas,—as is, and always will be the case with collectors, who are ever and anon doomed to see the illusions which have gathered about some of their treasures entirely destroyed,—I showed my dish to various connoisseurs of ceramic art, and one and all pronounced it beautiful, but of modern French production. I was not then aware of the fact that, for half a century, France had produced such works as copies from Palissy. Very charming these copies were, and numberless specimens are still to be had.

The charm, however, was broken, not so much because my dish—with its beautiful and almost living fish in the centre, its crabs almost crawling amidst the fern-leaves on its rim, while the snails and the mussels looked as if recently gathered from the shore—was of less value; but because

the ridiculous pride, which collectors more or less feel—of knowing better than their neighbours—was utterly dispelled. So one morning, when a “pleasant friend” looked in, I decided that my dish and I should part company.

“I have come to look at your Palissy dish,” said my friend, somewhat confident, as I thought, in his superior knowledge. Thus he delivered his opinion.

“Oh! ah, yes; very fine specimen indeed—of French pottery; admirably executed, but as for being genuine Palissy, it is no more Palissy than I am. Sell it. You go to Petersburg, take it there; you will get double what you will in England.”

Certainly he was not Palissy either in character or humility, if we can judge from history as regards that highly-gifted Christian; and I did, I confess it, at the moment feel inclined to throw the dish at his head.

But reason and good humour came to my aid, and having with some bitterness replied, “No, you are certainly not Palissy,” I offered him some lun-

cheon, and the sight of a beautiful Wedgwood plaque, which I had purchased of Mr. Negri, of Petersburg, of both of which he approved, and ere he parted, I agreed to take my heretofore much-prized dish to that imperial city.

It was in the days of posting from the Prussian frontier—I should rather say sledging, the season being midwinter, for the railway was not then working. In the hurry of starting, not having been able to superintend the careful packing of my dish, I found, on arriving at the end of my journey, that it was smashed into twenty pieces. The sight overwhelmed me; here, as I supposed, was the end of my treasure. Not a bit of it. I was about to cast the fragments into the rushing waters of the Neva; when a good Samaritan in female attire, my hostess, entered my room with a note requesting my attendance at an ambassadorial gastronomic entertainment; hour 7, by the clock of St. Isaac.

The good lady looked at me with evident commiseration, knowing my love for such articles of *virtù*, and then at the broken dish. "What a

pity, sir; how badly packed it must have been. Why, the fish is alive."

"Fish!" said I, "yes, boil it for dinner, if you will; but pray take the fragments from my sight, and forget that it was once a dish in which a pike might have been proud to have been served before the Emperor." She gathered up the remains and departed; and a few days subsequently I also departed for old England.

"What did you do with the Palissy dish, dad?" said the heir to my Spanish château, after I had been welcomed home.

"Did, my boy, why gave it away, to be sure," and the subject dropped.

About six months afterwards, duty again called me to Petersburg; the morning of my arrival was brilliant summer-time. I awoke from a lengthened slumber after the fatigue of a journey of several consecutive days and nights, sprang out of bed, and prepared for the matutinal cold bath. When behold, on the table before me, my precious dish, or a most remarkable counterpart. I wrapped my dressing-gown around me, and rang

the bell. "Beg," said I to the servant, "Miss B—— to do me the favour of a few minutes' conversation." The good woman entered, smiling, hoped I had slept well, and had a good appetite for breakfast. "Both," said I, "thanks ; but what about this dish : it is, as far as I can see, for as yet I have not touched it, precisely like that the fragments of which I gave you to throw into the Neva."

"It is the very same," said the good lady ; "a traveller came here and mended it, and with pleasure I return it to its rightful owner. It was admirably restored."

"I will not have it again," I replied ; "it is yours ; but I will take it to Negri's, and try and sell it for you—I shall ask fifty roubles, cheap at the money." I did so. Negri admired it, as all had, regretted that it had been broken, and promised to do his best to convert it into current coin of the realm, which then, as now, was dirty paper, and I left it in his safe keeping.

Months again elapsed ere I returned to the imperial city, and visited his collection. "What have you done with the dish?" said I, after having

purchased a few trifles he had kindly reserved for me.

"I have it still," he replied. "I could have sold it a hundred times had it not been repaired; but you limited me as to price, and I could not take less."

"Be good enough to send it to my hotel." He did so, properly packed as I supposed; and having insisted on giving my good hostess an ample equivalent, I once more took it to England. On my arrival it was again in fragments. I sent for a clever china-mender, whom I had been in the habit of employing. "Can you restore that?" said I, showing him the dish.

"Certainly, sir," and he did restore it far better than it had previously been restored; and it is now, after all its wanderings over thousands of miles and misfortunes, still worthy of admiration, the property of one whom I esteem, but whose collection, although in its infancy, or I greatly mistake, will become, as each year goes round, of far greater quality and account, to which I shall endeavour to add; knowing that the "*bric-à-brac*"

fever, once caught, is rarely cured till it is well paid for.

Petersburg, for the present, adieu! You can boast of many rough charms, though I am by no means of the opinion that the Nevsky Prospect is the finest street in Europe.

"Look at this, sir," says a continental dealer, particularly in Italy, ignoring Capo di Monte, which in beauty can rival all porcelains; "it is true old Saxe Dresden, came from the collection of the Marquis de Milanaro," as if the fact imported one jot as to its reality, or origin, or age—but what as to its merit or beauty? Well, I repeat, some of the groups of figures and vases, the production of the Imperial Factory in Russia, modern though they may be, are equal to any they now produce at Miessen, and superior in form and execution, if not precisely so in contour.

With all this there is a fashion in "bric-à-brac" hunting, as there is in female attire, though happily that fashion is not derived from the same source; the one being from the French *demi-monde*, the other from imagination. An Englishman, neither

good-looking nor over-polite, rules the cutting out of ladies' dresses in Paris at £25 a dress; and Worcester china may be the fashion, because it is difficult to obtain fine specimens. If Mr. W. charged £5 for his dresses, few would employ him.

There are still many specimens worth buying in the old market at Petersburg; but there, as elsewhere, what was to be had for a few roubles is now valued at pounds. I had in my possession two figures far superior, in my humble opinion, to any modern Berlin or Dresden, which I parted with for treble the cost.

CHAPTER VII.

BERLIN.

THE train starts. I turn my back on the city of the Czars, and fortify myself with patience and endurance, shut my eyes on nature, which is said to be, when unadorned, adorned the most. Certainly the observation does not apply to the scenery between the capital of all the Russias and the frontier city of Königsberg, where Prussian kings are crowned by the grace of God, and buried by permission of the people. In fact, there is not one single point of interest nor a single feature of beauty throughout the long weary versts which divide the empire of Russia from that of Prussia; and although the Russian railways offer much comfort, it requires no common amount of patience to endure the journey, and no common stomach to endure the means of sustenance offered by the wayside. This is no longer the case; the railways direct from the German capital to that

of Russia are first rate, as are the buffets on the line.

In good faith, the contrast between comparative barbarism and civilization, which is manifest within the range of a mile from frontier to frontier, is so palpable, that I can only compare the sensation with that felt upon stepping on to the pier at Dover after a boisterous passage from Calais if you are a sufferer from the sea.

Well do I recollect, in times but recently gone by, after posting from Petersburg for days and nights, the frontier was at last gained—when, half-frozen by the cold, or suffocated by dust and heat, according to the season—with what intense joy I rattled over the little wooden bridge that spanned the muddy ditch—for muddy ditch it is—which divides the empires of Russia and Prussia, and pulled up at the miserable little Custom-house, having nothing to declare but that I was well-nigh exhausted, and unutterably pleased at the idea of ere long finding myself in that city called Königsberg, which boasts of thirty-two bastions, eight gates, and thirty churches—though I never dis-

covered the inhabitants to be more moral than elsewhere.

As regards bric-à-brac, there is no field for the hunter in Königsberg; at least, I never discovered such. Yet I may write in error; for could I, like Asmodeus, have been permitted to uncover the roofs and peep into the domiciles of the beer-drinking and sausage-eating citizens, who dare say what art-treasures I might have found, and how readily they might have been converted into thalers? However, nothing did I ever discover except a rather elegant little cream-coloured jug from one of dear Wedgwood's models; but when Mein Herr, who wished to dispose of it, permitted me to examine it, I discovered the words "Neale & Co.'s" imprinted on the ware—and so, good morning!

Let us now journey on to Berlin. Berlin! the very writing of the name causes my heart to beat and my blood to boil; and the hand which holds a pen seems to grasp a revolver, the hilt of a Toledo blade, or touch the trigger of a Snider. What days of more than solitude have I passed

from sunrise to sunset in that beautiful but insupportably dull city! How often have I paced along the Linden to kill an hour, in the fear of being compelled to kill myself! How have I longed for night, that I might sleep till the dawn of another day; and when that day has come, how I have longed for night again! Not that there is no sport for the bric-à-brac hunter; far from it, as I shall soon tell you. Moreover, the game, if not of the very finest condition, is plentiful, but strictly preserved,—indeed, so strictly, if of any beauty and rarity, that a Rothschild or a millionaire alone has a chance of bagging any; and all I can say is, that if the sellers thereof get the price they demand, I heartily wish that, instead of being a hunter, I were a seller.

It happened that I found myself in No. 16, first floor back, Hôtel d'Angleterre, Berlin, having been there previously about thirty times, at the very period when the army of needle-gun renown were marching to glory—that is to say, to have their own heads broken, with an ardent desire to break those of their enemies—in other words, on the eve

of those untoward events for Austria called Sadowa and Königgrätz, which changed the Berliner Somniferoſo into the Berliner Bombaſtioſo, ſince the late war with France into Bombaſtiniffimo.

Truly thoſe were exciting times for the beautiful ſleepy city of the Linden avenue. The betting at the twenty-groſchen-per-head table-d'hôte (now a thaler), was at or about five to four, with no takers, that Benedek would ſleep in the royal palace in the Schloſs-Platz within a fortnight. Under theſe circumſtances, I roſe one morning early and went forth into the city—the contrast of whoſe beauty and architectural magnificence with the condition of the inhabitants is moſt ſtriking—in ſearch of bric-à-brac, hugging to my heart of hearts the innocent belief that ſome ſlight fear of coming pillage might, from all I had heard on the previous evening, have entered into the minds of the dealers in what are oftentimes incorrectly termed works of art, ſuggeſting to them that it might be better to ſell cheap than ſuffer utter loſs from pillage or deſtruction. It was an ignoble, ungenerous, ſelfiſh idea, no doubt ; but the deſire to

become the possessor, cheaply, of some exquisite Berlin groups, vases, &c., or for nothing according to the usual phraseology—which means half their value—was an influence too strong to be combated.

Thus I tripped jauntily up the Linden with fond anticipations of my wishes being realized, the more so as I had practical proof of the apparent need of the inhabitants; for as I gazed up the street on that which appeared to be the habitation of a prince, a window suddenly opened in the lower story, and a cobbler hung out a pair of boots for sale; on the second story a tailor had done the same by a waistcoat and breeches; and on the top floor, probably a fifth, a woman, performing the matutinal offices, cast into the street a shovel of potato-peelings on the heads of the passers-by. A few steps farther, near a building apparently a palace, an Israelite saluted me from an attic, asking if I had anything to exchange, why, I know not; while below I observed linen hanging out to dry, which belonged, doubtless, to a gallant officer who was being shaved by the barber hard by in a cave below the pavement.

Now writing as I do these perfectly true little historiettes of my bric-à-brac hunting throughout Europe, I find it necessary thus to introduce them to the several cities and shops where my wandering footsteps may have led me. My opinion as regards places and people, are my opinions, nothing more. Let others judge for themselves; and therefore having done and seen all that Murray tells you to do and see—not that he is always correct—put on your hat, handle your umbrella, if you have one, and let us walk abroad; always bearing in mind that the fact of being asked ten thalers for a Berlin cup, and fifty for a Berlin group, by no means implies that you are to give it—certainly not. Offer that which your judgment and taste—if you possess either—dictate; or do as I have done, though your purse may be far better filled: give, —without you are determined to have the treasure on which you have set your heart at any price,—just thirty per cent. below that which experience tells you the object to be actually worth. I say this to the novice, not to the connoisseur, for he knows, and knows well, how

to act—at least he believes he does, and is often at fault.

There are many bric-à-brac shops at Berlin. Herr Lewy, or Levy, or, if you will, Levi—for he is an unquestionable Israelite, as, indeed, nearly all bric-à-brac dealers are—is the first to whom I should recommend a visit. Like all dealers, he seeks his price, and a tolerably heavy one it is ; but he is fair and truthful, and, moreover, a first-rate judge ; and at times he has many articles worthy of admiration. In fact, he is first and foremost, in my humble estimation, as a Berlin dealer. His address was Dorotheen-strasse, No. 20, now changed.

Herr Meier No. 2, Grenzhaus—commonly called the English Parliament—has by far the largest collection in Berlin — a splendid selection of Venetian glass, and a great variety of carvings and china worthy of the collector's notice. Unless that collector, however, has a very long purse, or intends to purchase at the price desired by Herr Meier, it is as well he should avoid the sin of temptation, and that of coveting what he cannot obtain, which has often been my case.

There are also Herr Arnold, No. 26 on the Linden, and Herr Frescati, No. 21. In the shops of these two gentlemen may sometimes be found rare art-treasures. Happy he who can afford to give the prices asked for them.

Herr Leuschner has also a bric-à-brac shop in Tannen-strasse, No. 15. Formerly he had a modest collection in a shop on the Linden; but I have invariably found, and practically proved the fact in many foreign capitals, that bric-à-brac sellers rise rapidly as regards fortune. I by no means desire to say unequivocally.

Although the foundation of the celebrated porcelain manufactory and museum of Berlin is to be attributed to the great monarch, statesman, poet, and philosopher, Frederick the Great of Prussia, who, in the midst of the mighty wars in which he was engaged, turned his attention to the beautiful fabric which was beginning to attract the lovers of the fine arts, there had been made in Berlin thirteen years previously (1750), under the immediate direction of Wilhelm Casper Wegel, a first attempt to produce specimens of the ceramic art. Wegel

pretended that he was in possession of certain secrets, and continued to carry on his business for seven years. Some of his works are even now to be met with; the cipher at the bottom (W) is still to be found. The pieces are well formed, with good colour, exhibiting fair workmanship, painting, glazing, and rich gilding.

In 1761, John Ernest Gotzkowski the younger commenced a new manufactory in the Leipziger-strasse. He obtained the secret of porcelain fabric from Ernest Heinrich Richard, who had been employed in Wegel's establishment, and, having analyzed the products, had made considerable progress. For the communication of his secrets Gotzkowski gave Richard 4,000 dollars, and for a salary of 1,200 dollars Richard undertook the direction. The celebrated enamel-painter, Jacque Claude, and Elias Meyer, the plastic modeller, from Meissen, with other workmen from the town, joined the establishment. Gotzkowski did not personally pursue his undertaking, but placed it under the management of the commissioner Grunenger, which led to his employment, from the year 1763

to 1786, at the head of the royal porcelain manufactory at Berlin. During the Seven Years' War, King Frederick had an opportunity of noticing the manufactories at Dresden and at Meissen. He induced the best workmen, painters and modellers, among whom were Meyer, Kleppel, and Bohme, to accompany him to Berlin; and with their assistance, and at his own expense, enriched his metropolis with the important and beautiful porcelain fabric since celebrated throughout Europe. Grunenger had soon to congratulate the king on the further addition of men of talent and celebrity, and Frederick the Great liberally endowed the newly-founded institution. Meyer received an annuity of 1,500 dollars, Kleppel 1,100, and Bohme 1,000.

Grunenger has given an account of his labours to obtain men best adapted for the different departments of the porcelain manufactory; among them Richard Bowman, and others of some note. From the year 1763 must be dated the actual foundation of the royal establishment; for then Gotzkowski, in the month of August, gave up to

the king the whole of his fabric of porcelain, receiving 225,000 dollars, and entering into a contract for the sale of his secrets. From the specification and inventory drawn up on the occasion, some idea may be formed of the magnitude of his enterprise. There were 7 administrators, 1 artist, 1 model-master, 2 picture-inspectors, 6 furnace-men, 3 glaze-workers, 5 lathe-turners, 3 potters, 6 mill-workers, 2 polishers, 6 sculptors, 6 embossers, 6 founders, 11 designers, 6 earthenware-moulders, 13 potter-wheel-workers, 3 model-joiners, 1 girdler, 22 porcelain-painters, 22 picture-colourers, 3 colour-makers, 4 packers and attendants, 8 wood-framers; making altogether 147 persons. The attendant expenses were 10,200 dollars. It is calculated that 29,516 red and coloured earthenware, more than 10,000 white vessels, and 4,866 painted porcelain—many of them of grotesque form, and many of the fashion of the day—were fabricated; articles of every description—vases, flacons, groups of various descriptions, statuary, snuff-boxes, fancy articles, earrings, lamps, and everything that the artist could suggest and the

potter carry out. It is satisfactory to know that there exist at the present day 133 models from which these articles were fabricated ; and the results of the labour, the energy, and the taste brought into play a hundred years ago may easily be studied.

The contract of Gotzkowski appears to have been most advantageous to him, and to have excited considerable discussion : he, however, gave up his establishment on terms that in these days would hardly appear sufficient for the payment of his many years of labour. It was in September, 1763, that Frederick the Great appeared for the first time in his manufactory. His reception was, of course, worthy of a monarch, and he seems to have examined everything with the attention of a master and of an artist. His eye fell upon every object of interest, and he freely expressed his opinion. In the moulding-room and the turners' department he remained a long time, and examined the materials. Near the ovens he entered into a long conversation with one of the furnace-men, and he also discoursed freely and at length with Grunenger, who has recorded in his chronicle the

sensible remarks made by his Majesty, who ponted out the improvements which he considered might be made. The questions he asked were evidently those of a person who was conversant with his subject, and determined to pursue it. He remained about two hours, and, on retiring, promised his gracious protection to his artists. Commissioner Grunenger, Maritius Jacobi, Nogel, Eichman, Richard, Meyer, Clauce, Bohme, and Kleppel continued at the head of the establishment, and directed the different departments. A sum of 140,000 dollars was devoted to the improvement of the fabric.

Every effort was made to produce porcelain as remarkable for its material as for its beauty. In order to promote its introduction largely into commerce, a certain number of Jews were privileged to purchase articles as soon as they appeared, and to distribute them in foreign countries. This permission has formed the groundwork of Miss Edgeworth's celebrated novel, "The Prussian Vase." In 1769 an order was published permitting a lottery company to purchase annually to the amount of 90,000 dollars. In September, 1763, the king ap-

peared at the board of directors, read their report, and ordered the construction of two edifices—one of three stories, 350 feet in length ; the other two stories, of 180 feet. He built a new mill for pulverizing the materials, with apparatus for cleansing and preparing the clay employed. He was anxious to have, as soon as possible, new specimens. He ordered that potter's clay and earthy materials should be sent from all parts of his dominions, and enumerated several localities in which he himself had seen earth adapted for porcelain. The king's orders were quickly obeyed. In 1771, in the neighbourhood of Brackwitz, not far from Halle, a superior clay was discovered, from which a porcelain of exquisite beauty and whiteness was obtained, to the great delight of the monarch. Somewhat later discoveries were made at Beerdersee and at Morland Seumwitz, of earthy material of the highest quality, sufficient for consumption during a century ; and from thence the royal manufactory at this day derives its most valuable material. The reputation of the fabric was quickly extended far and near. The Duke of Brunswick and the

Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel came to witness the progress; and the Count Woronzoff, with several of the Russian nobility, were also attracted. His highness the Turkish ambassador, Achmet Effendi, a great amateur of porcelain and fully conversant with its manufacture, visited the royal manufactory, much to the satisfaction of Grunenger, who has narrated the circumstances attendant upon the visit.

The untiring zeal and energy of the king awakened a spirit of enthusiasm in every department, which led to the happiest results. Science and art were called in to superintend all the arrangements: mineralogists studied the materials, engineers constructed the ovens, chemists produced the colours, and painters composed the designs. The style and taste of the Berlin porcelain called forth the admiration of Europe; crowned heads were eager to receive presents from the royal owner; the saloons of the aristocratic world could not be considered richly furnished unless some specimen of the Prussian manufacture was exhibited. Nor was this without cause; for the beautifully enamelled

surface displayed subjects after Watteau, Boucher, Savaret, Buffles; the customs of all ages; flowers, birds, insects,—exquisitely painted in colours of radiant splendour. The articles were modelled after classic forms, or according to the principles of beauty generally admitted at the period; the ornaments and the decorations were of the richest character; allegorical figures, statues from the antique, sheep, shepherdesses, and the most *rococo* as well as humorous subjects, were rapidly executed. His Majesty was perfectly delighted when snuff-boxes were produced, the covers of which exhibited to his admiring courtiers miniatures of the royal personage himself; and happy was the individual who received from such hands a mark of royal regard. After a night broken by the agonies of gout in his hands and feet, at six in the morning would Frederick receive with delight the director of the royal manufactory, who came to show a new *chef-d'œuvre*, which he would place on a table by the royal bedside. The death of the monarch did not diminish the importance of the great establishment. Prince Henry and Princess Amelia had

already evinced a deep interest in the ceramic art. In 1787 Frederick William II. appointed a commission, under the direction of the minister Von Stemitz and Count Reden, and great improvements in the management were carried out. The same taste and industry were everywhere encouraged. The construction of the ovens was more scientifically attended to, in consequence of the studies of caloric and of temperature having led to economy of fuel and regulation of heat. Germany was compelled to acknowledge that the perfection of porcelain had been reached at Berlin, notwithstanding the rivalry of Dresden, of Meissen, and of other rich cities. Since the year 1832 the manufactory has not ceased to deserve the admiration of the public. Colossal vases have been produced which have entered into the collections of the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of England. Probably the most beautiful are those now in the Louvre, presented to Louis Philippe in 1844. They are more than six feet in height, in the shape of amphoræ, with garlands of flowers upon a red ground, richly gilt and ornamented. In

1845 Prince Albert became possessor of a magnificent dish, two feet and a half in diameter, which he considered the *chef-d'œuvre* of the Berlin manufactory. There is no cessation of activity and emulation at the present hour, and the royal patronage is still bestowed upon the establishment; at least I am so informed. Meanwhile, in my humble opinion, the Berlin fabric has greatly deteriorated, especially as regards fine groups and figures, which are little estimated by collectors, in fact it has become a mere commercial china establishment.

CHAPTER VIII.

DRESDEN.

FROM Berlin to Dresden is a question of three or four hours' patience, an indifferent railway carriage, and four or five thalers of expenditure, considerable smoking, and as long a sleep as possible.

I say patience, inasmuch as the country through which the traveller passes is utterly devoid of interest till the fair city is in sight, for the most part being through vast sandy though tolerably well-cultivated places, interminable pine forests, and endless halts at small stations, wherein more bad beer is imbibed, and more sausages are consumed by Prussian passengers than would feed a regiment; although foreigners generally consider it an established fact that Englishmen monopolize that most valuable acquisition to health and gastro-nomic enjoyment, a good appetite; whereas nine out of every ten subjects of the Prussian Emperor

would beat the best feeder among us by a beef-steak and onions, to say nothing of swallowing half his knife into the bargain, and a gallon of beer.

Moreover, although four or five hours are frittered away in the transit from the city of Berlin to that of Dresden, in a train, evidently by error termed an express train, the journey might be readily accomplished, and would be so either in England or France, in two hours; but these German, or rather let me call them Prussian trains, are proverbially slow and sleepy, if safe.

Dresden is, or at least ought to be, the city *par excellence* for a bric-à-brac hunter. The very name of Dresden seems to convey to the senses of the lover of the ceramic art all that is charming, ancient, rare, and beautiful in form and colour. Vases and groups, clocks and candelabra, excite the imagination, and fill with keen anticipation of delight the breast of an eager hunter, who, for the first time in his life approached, ere Prussian rule commenced, that still pleasant though less stirring city watered by the Elbe.

On the first night of his arrival there, rest is

denied to him : his nerves are excited, his imagination conjures up the treasures he will behold on the morrow ; if he sleeps at all, it is to dream of Böttcher, Marcolini, Horold, and the factory at Meissen.

When I first had the good fortune, years lang syne, to visit Dresden, it was not only one of the pleasantest, but, for society, cheapness of living, comfort, and beauty, second to hardly any city in Europe. Diplomats of all nations mixed together in friendly and hospitable association, and passing visitors from foreign lands, properly accredited, were received not only by the residents in the country, but the society which had gathered together for various reasons,—such as the education of their children, economy, or a life of quiet ease, surrounded by beauties of nature, and simple elegance of daily life, in connection with health and various other attributes, with that frank kindness which makes the world we live in, if not one of unalloyed happiness, still of passing comfort and enjoyment.

I do not presume to say that the grasping hand

of territorial aggrandizement, or bigotry, or conquest, or policy, or whatever name or words plain-speaking men judge fit to use, has in any manner altered the great beauties which nature and nature's God have awarded to this favoured district; but I do say, without fear of contradiction, that the Dresden that was, and the Dresden that is, are, as far as residence or even a temporary visit is concerned, apparently wide apart.

The object of my first visit to that pleasant abode of Saxon monarchy and art-treasures was twofold: a brief repose from the hard, practical duties of an active life, combined with an ardent desire to examine the ceramic collections, gathered together in its museums, and not without a hope of visiting the far-famed china manufactory at Meissen, where, in the days we live, hours of enjoyment to the lover of bric-à-brac may be secured, Meissen being easily gained by steam-boat on the Elbe, or by railway: the waters of the Elbe in summer decidedly for choice.

Meanwhile, as is doubtless the case with all lovers and collectors of ceramic treasures, I had heard

and read, and pondered over with interest all the facts, historiettes, and anecdotes connected with what is supposed to be the first European factory of porcelain, established at Meissen near Dresden in the beginning of the 18th century. I had read how John Frederick Böttcher, an apothecary's assistant, being suspected of alchemy, had fled from Berlin, his native city, to avoid prosecution, and had taken refuge in the pleasant city of Dresden. How Augustus the Elector, the then proud and despotic ruler of Saxony, after hearing the fugitive's tale, questioned him minutely as to his knowledge of the art of making gold—then believed in—and placed him in the royal laboratory under Tschirnhausen, who was then engaged in searching for the universal medicine. In the course of the experiments which he there carried on, a composition was unexpectedly produced, exhibiting many of the characteristics of oriental china porcelain.

His Majesty, perceiving the great importance of the discovery, immediately sent him to the castle of Albrechtsberg at Meissen, and thence

with his workmen, under an escort of cavalry, to the fortress of Königstein, where pleasantly shut up from the bright world without—that is, incarcerated for despotic gain—he pursued his artistic and chemical researches.

Ay! Herr Minton, of our dear fatherland, what say you? Should you like a year in the Tower or Newgate, the better to enable you to pursue the glorious art in which your name stands in such honourable prominence?

Yet, perchance, those were some of the good old days many are so fond of croaking about, when kings claimed the mental slavery of their subjects, and treated the genius of man as a source of personal profit. What a lesson is open to us in these comparatively happy and enlightened times, as compared with the history of ages past!

Could we be permitted occasionally to look on kings and queens as human beings, and not, as a talented writer once observed, “coming down upon you in velvet and fur, with crowns on their heads,” bedizened with useless stars and ribbons; men and women divided from their fellow beings,

both by position and all natural feelings;—such persons can possibly imagine poor Böttcher, as incarcerated for having discovered something unknown to his neighbours, yet so valuable to the German race, from which selfish profit was first to be made. For my part, I own to the satisfaction I should feel at beholding a foreign potentate, getting out of his matutinal bath, if given to that refreshing habit of cleanliness and health—the Sultan, for example, or the King of Königgratz—with a rough towel in his hand, having a good appetite, and somewhat late for breakfast. I take it, I should find him, without the crown, the velvet, and the fur, like other men, save in position, a mere slave of birth.

Thousands grumble because the best of all sovereigns prefers as much repose as is consistent with her high calling, and loves to commune with nature and her God. Let such look back to the era when sovereigns were tyrants, and the genius of a subject was converted into a source of personal riches. Were I a king, I certainly would have a rare collection of bric-à-brac, but I would rather have

granted a peerage to Böttcher than a prison in a castle ; and he deserved it far more than a third of the number on whom it is conferred in these days, for he created art beauties which, to the hour we live, are an immense source of commerce, and undying pleasure in possession to the world at large.

In the year 1707, Böttcher, having secured the confidence of the Elector, returned to Dresden, where he pursued his experimental art with renewed vigour and eventual success.

His first productions were simply a sort of red pottery, scarcely to be denominated porcelain, specimens of which may now be purchased as curiosities, if not for their beauty, in almost every capital of Europe. This he brought to some perfection, but the results were more curious than elegant as works of art. In 1709, however, he succeeded in producing his white porcelain, which was brought to such perfection in 1815, that it was generally considered to be the first European discovery of porcelain, and many are still of opinion that it has never been surpassed. The merit of the discovery of the first manufacture in Europe

has been generally awarded to Dresden in 1709. But it appears only to have been a revival, inasmuch as, in 1580, Florence produced a porcelain of durable character, now almost, if not quite, unattainable. So devoted was he to the hoped-for results of his ceramic art, that, although he was not under the necessity of burning his household goods to keep his furnace alive—as was the case with the nobler Palissy—history tells us that he sat up long nights and days watching the regularity of its heat.

How he composed his artificial paste has never been known. The discovery of the natural paste, or kaolin, which he subsequently used with such great and admirable success, was made as related in a simple tale, known doubtless to most collectors and lovers of bric-à-bric, but which I will tell here for the benefit of those who may hereafter find pleasure or profit in hunting for ceramic treasures. It runs as follows:—

A rich ironmaster, named Schnorr, when riding over his estate at Aue, near Erzgebirge, observed that his horse's feet stuck fast in some perfectly

white earth or clay. Hair powder being at the period a valuable object of commerce, it immediately occurred to him that this white earth, when dried and carefully prepared, might be a valuable substitute, while subsequent experiments justified his discernment. This powder soon became an article of general use throughout Saxony. The king's guards were powdered, their pigtails cheaply whitened; but at length Böttcher having powdered his own wig, found it so heavy that he felt convinced the so-called powder must be earth; and having tried it in the fire, to his great delight and untold joy, discovered that it was the very material he had long sought for in vain,—that is, the true kaolin. Whereupon the Elector, his master, commanded that his subjects' wigs should no longer be whitened with clay; the powder was bought up, and secretly conveyed in barrels to the porcelain manufactory, and its exportation henceforth strictly prohibited. What a weight was thereby taken from the head and heart of Böttcher, as doubtless the heads of many of the Saxons! What ceramic treasures were henceforth distributed to the world

at large ! I never think of the era of this discovery but it occurs to me that every collector and dealer in bric-à-brac should meet annually to celebrate the feast of St. Böttcher, a saint who did more good to mankind, I take it, than half the saints who are fêted ; for what pleasure and comfort, and commerce, did this discovery not produce ! But man's merits and virtues are, alas ! too soon forgotten, and this occurred "only one hundred and fifty years" lang syne.

At that period everything connected with the Dresden manufactory was carried on with a degree of secrecy, that in these days of real or comparative liberty may well excite wonderment. The workmen were bound by the most solemn oaths, and kept in a castle, having all the characteristics of a prison, which they were never permitted to leave, and into which no stranger was ever allowed to enter. "*Geheim bis in's Grab*,"—be secret unto death—was the motto hung up conspicuously in every workshop and department. Depressing as we may suppose such conditions to have been, the workmen pursued their labour cheerfully and successfully,

and brought that which the genius of Böttcher designed more nearly to perfection than, I fear, it will ever be brought again.

Now let us cross the Elbe, over that famous stone bridge, said to be the longest and finest in Germany, built as our friends of other days tell us—and why should we doubt them?—or rather let me say, paid for, by money raised by the sale of dispensations from the Pope, for permission to eat butter and eggs during Lent; Pope's pennies, in fact. Whether true or false, that a bridge was built of butter and eggs, it has stood the test of Elbe's rapid streams for many a long year, notwithstanding the waters have been known to rise sixteen feet in four hours, when the snows of winter thaw rapidly, and large masses of floating ice crush against its arches. Strong as it is, however, the centre arch gave way in 1813 to the force of powder, having been blown up by Davoust to make good his retreat to Leipsic. However, we are now over it: so, winter though it be, let us take up our pleasant abode in the Hôtel Belle Vue, select a cheerful room, and take a glance at

the bright moon glittering on the Elbe, and over the valley towards Meissen ; shut the casement, for the night is chilly ; and eat our supper in moderate comfort, without asking a dispensation or fear of excommunication, and sleep calmly in anticipated pleasure of the morrow.

I take it for granted that those who have so far followed my footsteps are, for the most part, ardent lovers of the ceramic art,—in fact, bric-à-brac hunters,—and that it is therefore their especial pleasure, when visiting the capitals of Europe, to seek the abodes of dealers in such articles, and visit them wheresoever they are to be found. With palaces, picture-galleries, and public sights, these pages have little or nothing to do. Pictures can scarcely be classed as bric-à-brac, though a journey of a thousand miles would be well repaid to linger for one bright morning in the Gallery of Dresden. There is, however, one museum in which the lover of bric-à-brac, who visits the fair city of Dresden, may feast on the beautiful productions of the china factory ; where he may gloat on the untold treasures in the Green Vaults—“Grüne Geirölbe.”

They are replete with the rarest specimens of ancient art, and hours, nay days, may be spent in their exploration.

Having visited the "Green Vaults," brace up your nerves, shut out all feeling of covetous longing from your heart, and then hasten to the Japanese Palace, or porcelain collection, "*Porzellan sammlung*." If possible, select a bright sunny morning for your first visit, because all works of art are best seen under such auspices. You will find sixty thousand pieces of china grouped in eighteen apartments, the contents of which are catalogued in five manuscript folio volumes. In addition to a large collection, comprising the earliest periods, as well as the finest modern productions of native Saxon ware, you will behold a grand display of Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Sèvres china ; with many interesting specimens of Böttcher's earliest attempts, and several examples of French ware, the gift of the Emperor Napoleon I.

One set of magnificent china is said to have been given to the Elector Augustus II., by

Frederick I. of Prussia, for a regiment of dragoons fully equipped; and a document certifying this exchange, is said to be among the archives of Dresden, dated Nuremburg, 29th April, and countersigned at Charlottenburg, 1st May.

Having feasted on this collection, prepare yourself the following morning by a hearty breakfast, and—the weather being fair and bright—start for Meissen.

The road from Dresden to Meissen runs by the left bank of the Elbe, some short distance from it, at the foot of a range of sloping hills covered with vineyards, from which it is said some excellent wine is produced. The banks are also dotted over with villas; and I have heard the prospect compared with the neighbourhood of Florence, whereas the woodlands make it far more agreeable.

The factory of Meissen, as I have already remarked, was established by Augustus II., Elector of Saxony. I have also alluded to the experiments of Böttcher and Tschirnhausen, who commenced them in 1706 with brown clay found in the neighbourhood; and I have further related

how John Schnorr of Erzgebirge in 1811 discovered the white clay, known hereafter as Schonnorich messe Eide von Aure, which was sold largely at Dresden and Leipsic as hair-powder, and from which, although exhausted in 1850, the finest white china was produced.

Böttcher became director of the manufactory in 1710, and it has been again and again asserted that, up to the period of his death in 1719, white china was produced in Saxony only. This is, however, scarcely to be credited, as works were previously established both at St. Cloud, and in the Faubourg St. Antoine at Paris.

In 1720, painting and gilding of a very superior character were carried on under the superintendence of Horold; and in 1731 Landers, a sculptor, superintended the modelling of groups, animals, and vases; from which period up to 1756 the very best productions emanated from the Dresden factory. Angelica Kauffman was numbered among the most distinguished painters, and specimens of her painting are still occasionally met with.

In 1754, Christian Wilsom Ernst Bismark became director, and in 1778 the King of Saxony himself personally superintended the establishment. In 1796, Marcolini was appointed director, and held the post until 1814, when Von Oppel succeeded him. In 1833 M'Lau took his place, and the manufactory has since been styled "Königliche Sachsische Porzellan Manufaktur," in fact, the Royal Factory.

The building, which stands on a commanding position, was formerly the residence of Saxon Princes, and agreeable writers have expressed much regret that it should have been so cruelly desecrated. I confess that I have no such feelings of regret. For a century and more, it has been, and it is to be hoped will still continue to be, the source of employment for taste and talent, opening year by year the most agreeable commerce to all lovers of ceramic art. There men labour for the bread of life, surrounded by taste and beauty, and from that labour produce objects distributed throughout the world; and if so be their productions are by no means equal to those

of ages past, I do not envy the man who, having passed some hours in their inspection, can turn his back thereon without admiration of that which he has seen, and learnt therefrom a lesson—yes, a practical lesson—which is, and I say it not uncourteously, that modern art, with all its beauty, can bear no comparison with that of our forefathers. Those who may perchance have had the good fortune to visit the Exhibition of 1851, and those of 1862 in London, and 1867 in Paris, will I fancy agree with me that, while science, as regards machinery, marches with rapid strides, art and inventive genius, as regards the beautiful, is positively at a standstill.

Having lingered in the “Green Vaults,” passed many an hour in the Porcelain Museum, enjoyed a long summer’s day at Meissen, let us now walk through the city, and pay a visit to the numerous emporiums of treasures—in fact, have a good bric-à-brac hunt.

It is a pleasant pastime for those who love the pursuit—yes, a very pleasant pastime—and yet I must speak the truth. I know of none

wherein all human passions, for the most part evil ones, require to be kept under such strict control; they must be thus numbered: Do not covet other men's goods, "jealousy," "envy," "longing," "patience," "temper," self-control, anger, economy without meanness, and honest assertions.

These passions will all trouble you, and must be met calmly, courteously, patiently, with good temper, taste and experience, money. The last above all; if you have it not, or at least sufficient to gratify one passion, remain at home; you will only return with sadness and regret.

Previous to commencing our walk, however, I would be permitted to say a word to the inexperienced in bric-à-brac hunting,—it is to advise them to banish from their minds the idea, that the being in Dresden will enable them to secure a good specimen of Dresden china, or, save by the merest chance, any article of *vertu*, modern or ancient, even on "reasonable" terms.

True, there was a pleasant era in days lang syne when the fortunate hunter might win the day. That day is now over; and if he desire to

obtain some really first-rate specimens at a fair price, I do not think he need take the trouble of going further than London.

The delusions, the falsifications, the unworthy trickeries—to call them by their right name, forgeries—as regards marks, paintings, mendings, &c., are incomprehensible, and the keenest and most experienced are taken in.

Besides a grand emporium for the sale of modern china from the Royal Factory, what are termed curiosity-shops—that is, bric-à-brac shops—abound in Dresden; and I doubt not but that they are known to all the hotel commissioners, who profit accordingly. I shall decline, therefore, to offer a word of praise or dispraise as regards any of them; I will merely observe, that those who charge the most, and who lead the van as bric-à-brac sellers, are those I should be least inclined to seek. If they have any really good specimens they know perfectly well where to place them, and the bric-à-brac hunter will not obtain them without disbursing their full value.

Beautiful, nay exquisite on a general view, as

the modern Dresden may be said to be, in form, outline, sharpness and colouring, it is as inferior to the old, as a turnip to a peach ; indeed some of the Russian models are much finer, and all the modern china sold in Dresden is most absolutely priced. It so chanced that I found myself in that pleasant city at the moment of its occupation by Prussian troops, on or about the termination of that untoward battle, called Königgrätz, which terminated the fate of Austria, and caused her enemies, not without reason, to be somewhat more vain than they usually are ; and I found the inhabitants, who, to use plain words, had been in a terrible fright, cooling down a little to their usual pursuits.

Ten days previously, however, there was scarce a man or woman in the city who did not fear its being ransacked by the Austrain army, and while doubtless all the dealers in bric-à-brac, who had some knowledge of their country's history, recollected that Meissen was the battle-field between the Austrians and Prussians in 1759, when the manufactory was plundered, and the archives

destroyed; and who could venture to assert but that their private collections might share the same fate? And with this knowledge I sought my friends, the bric-à-brac dealers, full of hope and anticipation that I should find the market within range of my humble means.

Now, ere I say a word further on the subject of my own doings in this matter, I can safely assure ardent lovers of bric-à-brac, who fancy that Dresden is a sure find, as we say in hunting parlance, and that having found, possession is readily and cheaply acquired, that they never were more mistaken.

Of first-rate "ancient" Dresden china—pure and unbroken—there is very little to be purchased in the city of that name, and being so fortunate as to discover here and there something really worth having, the price is truly fabulous. Of china there are cartloads, and much that is beautiful, though modern; but for the collector and connoisseur, with a real knowledge of the art treasures he loves, there is little or nothing. False marks, modern painting on old white china, and traps of every

possible kind to catch the unwary, abound ; but of the real, and good, and beautiful, seek it not in Dresden : you need, in fact, as I have before suggested, go no farther than London, where, indeed, you will find far cheaper and far truer Dresden china.

It would be useless were I to point out to the lover of bric-à-brac the many shops by name that are there to be found : they are legion. He who desires to visit them, being unacquainted with the city, has only to apply to one of those numerous individuals who lounge about the hotels, and call themselves commissioners. They know all the best and the worst shops ; but, when visiting them, trust to yourself, if you have any knowledge of good from bad ; if not, satisfy yourself with what you obtain, which, as works of art, will I fear turn out to be worthless, or false, unless some angel of luck stand at your elbow.

At the period to which I have alluded, so great had been the fear of the Austrian army visiting the city, that all that was valuable had been packed away here, there, and everywhere, in cup-

boards, drawers, hampers, cellars, &c.; indeed I witnessed one hamper of Dresden cups—at least a hundred—for each of which a Paris dealer would have asked a sovereign or more, placed away under the manger of a stable.

The fear of pillage was only then subsiding; and the dealers were beginning to redecorate their shops with cups and figures, and vases, like tulips coming up in early summer; but the fear was subsiding, and so what a week previously might, I fancy, have been bought for an old song, according to common words, was even more expensive than heretofore; with the laudable idea of receiving payment for their terror and recent slack in business: and so I got little or nothing worth having. Neither is there very much worth having save modern china in this 19th century, except from private collections; and if so be there is, there is no difficulty in selling it. And yet what lover of the ceramic art should not visit that pleasant city? Few European capitals contain a greater number of objects calculated to gratify the curiosity of an intelligent traveller; moreover, it is

the residence of men of taste and talent, who contribute much to render society agreeable. The town itself is more pleasing at a distance than striking; it has neither fine streets nor imposing buildings, but its situation is charming. On quitting it for other scenes, not less fair, I would name for the benefit of the bric-à-brac hunter that, notwithstanding all the vigilance of the Elector of Saxony, one of the workmen named Stöbzel, escaped from Meissen, about the period of Böttcher's death in 1719, and reached Vienna; to which city my next chapter will introduce you in safety.

The importance of porcelain as an article of commerce was then so strongly recognized by the princes of Germany, that he was enthusiastically received. And thus, as I shall hereafter explain, arose in 1720 the great manufactory.

When Frederick attacked Dresden in 1745, the Porcelain King did not neglect to carry away his china and pictures, although he left the Electoral archives. The finest specimens at Meissen were made previous to the Seven Years' War. No expense was spared in their production—no sum

refused to obtain them ; while Count Brühl, minister to Augustus III., was the chief supporter of the manufactory under Taudler.

Ere I quit Dresden, I cannot refrain from relating a somewhat amusing little anecdote, told to me by a Russian gentleman—and there are few more agreeable fellow-travellers—with whom I once chanced to visit Meissen.

Among various articles of modern china which we had selected to purchase, I had chosen a good model of a pug dog.

“What are you about to do with that animal ?” said the Russian.

“Do with it,” I replied ; “why, make it a present to a lady who is very fond of dogs, so fond, indeed, that at times they are rather a nuisance to her friends. I intend, on presenting it, to express the hope that this may be the only dog henceforth seen in her boudoir, at least when I have the pleasure of calling.”

“*Parbleu !*” he exclaimed, laughing ; “I can tell you a somewhat droll story touching a ‘pug-dog,’ well known, I fancy, in Russia.

“Baron P—— was the owner of a very handsome one, which Catherine the Great was continually admiring, so that the Baron could do no less than present it to the Empress, who most graciously received it, and henceforth poor pug was so constantly crammed with luxuries, which he had never previously tasted, that he actually died of repletion.

“The Empress, much grieved at this event, said to one of her officers ‘Take P——, and let him be flayed and stuffed.’ In obedience to this despotic order, straightway the officer went to the Baron’s house, and with a face full of horror, repeated the Empress’s commands.

“As may be readily conceived, the Baron by no means considered his position a pleasant one ; for he well knew if she really was determined to flay and stuff him, there was no appeal. Nevertheless, he prevailed on the officer to let him go to the Empress, who, on hearing of the ridiculous mistake, was ready to expire with laughter. She soon, however, dispelled the Baron’s fears, by telling him it was the dead pug, to whom she had given

his name, and that she had ordered it, not him, to be flayed and stuffed.

"By the spirit of Böttcher, I verily believe the china pug you have purchased is a facsimile of the Baron."

Visit Meissen, my friends, and recollect, Art is truth: and truth is religion.

The specimens of Dresden, marked *R* are as common as turnips; but those generally found in shops must not be confounded or mentioned in the same breath with those grand pieces and services bearing this mark, which were made for Royalty alone, either for use or presents, and marked in gold. Genuine specimens of this mark are usually painted with views, and Chinese subjects were made under the superintendence of Höroldt, about 1376. An esteemed friend of my own has a set of fine vases of this period and mark, which are exquisitely painted in Chinese Examples.

Returning to the Nymphenburg, the name of "Auer" is justly celebrated as a first-rate artist who painted for that Factory; his signature appears on a service most charmingly decorated in

classical subjects, in the possession of a well-known English connoisseur.

Dresden china, if old and fine, was, and is, doubtless, beautiful, and much of modern Dresden has its charms to those who do not esteem refined art. But there were other factories in the past German Empire which produced specimens of surpassing beauty: need I name Frankenthal, Fulda, Carl Theodore, as also Nymphenburg?

I recently beheld a set of this latter china, which belonged to the Countess Damer, who left ten millions of thalers to the poor; her collection of China was also sold: this specimen, now in the collection of a friend in England, is exquisite. I venture also to remark, as I have already said, that first-rate Dresden china, particularly figures, are rarely surpassed; but the trickery and humbug, if I may use the word, are also rarely surpassed. As regards Nymphenburg, many of the finest specimens were painted by the justly celebrated artist "Auer," his signature is on the admirable service to which I have alluded.

CHAPTER IX.

VIENNA.

WHEN the fruit-trees are in the full blossom of late spring-time, and all nature is alive, there are few pleasanter scenes than that on which the traveller looks as he journeys from Dresden by the banks of the Elbe, to the Austrian frontier at Bodenbach. From thence to the ancient city of Prague the route is scarcely less interesting; and a few days' ramble amid the mountains of the Saxon Tyrol will amply reward all lovers of the picturesque,

Ere I commenced my quests as a bric-à-brac hunter in various capitals and towns throughout Europe, I felt, and still feel, that I might possibly create additional interest by briefly describing to my readers the countries and places in which for a time I lingered, rather than by dwelling merely on the tastes which induced such pursuits, inas-

much as to those who have not precisely the “*bric-à-brac*” fever, which causes me to halt at every window of what is generally termed a curiosity-shop, some few words in reference to the modes and manners of those far away in foreign lands, among whom my pursuits have led me to associate—as to the beauties of nature which, from time to time, my wanderings have enabled me to look upon and enjoy—must, I imagine, cause pleasant sensations to the lover of travel. Any man, be who he may, who has ears to hear and eyes to behold, who in simple language can tell his tale of other lands, and offer his experiences for the benefit of his fellow-men, must cause pleasure to many who seek knowledge beyond the narrow channel which divides them from people of other tongues, tastes, and habits.

Take, for instance, the volume recently offered to the perusal of her subjects by our gracious Queen ; how simple the language, how truthful and pleasant the descriptions ! Yet I would scarcely desire to call that man a Christian, or my friend, who could read it with a heart untouched with

admiration—that in every word he finds the woman, with all the best feelings of human nature predominating over the position of the queen. But I must return to the subject of bric-à-brac.

I once heard or read of a Spanish nobleman who possessed, as Spanish grandees not seldom do possess, innumerable titles. Travelling in Navarre, this haughty hidalgo was benighted during a heavy thunderstorm, and pulled up after midnight at a small posada, the owner of which had retired to rest. After much ringing and knocking, mine host's head appeared at the window of an upper story, and he begged to be informed who was below and what they wanted. "It is the Duke of—, Marquis of—, Count of—, and so forth, grandee of Spain," replied one of the hidalgo's followers. "Well then," said the sleepy host, "*vados ustedes con Dios*, for I have no room for so many." Such is precisely my case as regards the anecdotes which crowd on the mind of the travelling bric-à-brac hunter. So I must hasten on to Vienna.

- Now, wheresoever I wander, I make it a rule to obtain all possible information from my fellow-travellers, if cognisant of their language ; and again and again I have found the practice of no common value. I am fully aware that one of the most striking attributes of our national character is the reserve peculiar to Englishmen, who are in the habit, when visiting foreign lands, of intrenching themselves against every possibility of making new acquaintances with their fellow-men by any other means than the formally accredited medium of personal introduction. "I never was introduced to him," observed some one in palliation of not having rushed forward to aid a drowning stranger.

A characteristic anecdote has also been told of an Englishman, for the truth of which I can vouch. This punctilious traveller, who was no doubt impressed with that habitual idea of self-importance which we too often carry beyond the white cliffs of Albion, found himself, in the course of his continental travels, at a ball given by a British ambassadress. While pleasantly engaged

in the refreshment-room, a gentlemanly-looking person approached him, and expressed a hope that all his wants were well supplied, and that he was enjoying himself; to which courteous address the young "swell," so I must call him, with the sensitiveness of offended dignity, drawing himself up into an attitude of *hauteur*, replied, "Sir, you have the advantage of me!" What he thought of himself when he subsequently discovered that the kind advances he had so rudely repulsed had been offered by the ambassador himself, whose well-known courtesy and kindness to the humblest, as well as the most distinguished of his guests, was proverbial, I know not; but I would hope it taught him that the highest breeding ever shows itself in the most gentle courtesy to all.

There are upon earth no greater travellers than my fellow-countrymen. In every part of Europe and the known world they are to be met with, and yet nothing is more difficult than to convince them that there are many advantages resulting from usages and practices on the Continent which

we transplant to our fatherland. My own ideas are to the last degree cosmopolitan; and as my companion in the railway was a most agreeable-looking gentleman, I at once expressed my admiration of the scenery through which we were rapidly travelling, and obtained from him in courteous words the information that we were to be fellow-passengers as far as Prague. The offer of a good Havannah, which was cordially accepted, inaugurated our acquaintance, and my agreeable fellow-traveller's society made my journey a very pleasant one. He not only gave me much, information with reference to the city of Prague but induced me to remain there a day; and more, found out for me two bric-à-brac dealers, whose storehouses it would have been almost impossible for me to discover, inasmuch as the one lived over an Italian warehouse, and the other in the suburbs. At these emporiums I beheld much of interest, and had tolerable sport at little outlay. Prague, moreover, is a pleasant old city, full of historical reminiscences, wherein the traveller may employ himself profitably for a brief period, while there

is also much to be found that will well repay a bric-à-brac hunter, blest with leisure and patience. The city is situated on the banks of the Moldau, spanned by one of the most celebrated bridges in Europe, at least seven hundred feet long, and so wide that three carriages may pass abreast. This bridge, which stands on sixteen piers, surrounded by twenty-eight statues of saints, was built by Charles IV. in 1357. Throughout Austria all bridges are adorned with a statue of Saint Nepomuc, the patron-saint of bridges, who suffered martyrdom by being cast from that at Prague by order of King Wenceslaus. The saint's offence was his refusal to reveal to his majesty the secrets of his queen's confession. The streets of Prague are broad and airy, the palaces not remarkable, but the people, as at Königsberg, ought to be, if they are not, the most moral and pious in Europe, as they have ninety-two churches and chapels, and about forty convents, to pray in.

The city is large, and divided into three parts by the river, but not thickly populated. The royal castle, which crowns a hill, commands an extensive

prospect over a fine country, and is the point for all travellers to visit ; it is surrounded by fine and well-kept gardens.

From Prague I sped on to Vienna. The road, save here and there, offers little of fine scenery, and less of interest,—the country is rich and well cultivated,—till the battle-field of Wagram is reached ; and then across the Danube to the fair city of Vienna, than which there are few more agreeable. To one who has been there lang syne, and returns after a lapse of years, the changes that have taken place are somewhat startling. The ramparts by which the ancient city was surrounded are destroyed ; new broad streets and elegant houses have arisen as by magic ; public gardens, lakes, pleasant walks, and a noble opera-house to crown the whole, have been conjured into being. The extensive suburbs are now, as it were, joined to the city ; the ancient portion, and that which heretofore was a small and lively town, is now a grand city. The hotels are numerous, good, and not extravagant for those who desire to live reasonably. The beer, celebrated throughout Europe,

has lost nothing of its excellence, and may be justly termed the most healthy beverage that manhood can imbibe. In proof of its excellence I may observe that, at one single brewery in Vienna, during six months of the year, fourteen hundred and sixty barrels of beer, each containing thirty-six gallons, are daily brewed. Even the American "corpse-reviver," so much estimated by the Parisians, by no means surpasses it. To the bric-à-brac hunter Vienna also offers many charms; and there are numerous dealers of varied repute, though there, as elsewhere, the price has risen 200 per cent.; and those who a few years since lived apparently on soup, sauer-kraut, and sausages with contentment, and were satisfied with merely twenty per cent. profit, now dwell in fine houses, and display their goods in shops that would do no discredit to Regent Street or the Rue de la Paix. Fashion, however, here as elsewhere, rules the taste as regards porcelain, or what is termed "bric-à-brac," as it does in reference to chignons, bonnets, and crinolines; so one day people are mad about Chelsea ware, to-morrow distracted on the subject

of Sèvres ; anon Wedgwood or Dresden, Battersea enamel, or Capo di Monte, and so on. Vienna china—and I am at a loss to account for the reason—appears never to have been held in very high estimation in England. The imperial factory has nevertheless produced some wonderful specimens of workmanship, especially in rich gilding, unequalled in Europe. In the Vienna museum—recently established, as if to deplore the death of the factory—there may be seen specimens of form, colour, and painting, particularly as regards plates and cups, unrivalled even at Meissen or Berlin, and unequalled in the range of modern art. No manufactory, as I shall explain in subsequent pages, had more difficulties to contend with at its birth ; none ought to be more regretted on its downfall. It was long ere the precious means of producing porcelain, guarded with such secrecy and jealousy, was obtained by Austria, owing to the continued precautions of the Elector of Saxony. But, as workmen with knowledge increased, the precious secret became known at length through the German States. The history of the imperial porcelain

manufactory at Vienna is one of great interest to lovers of bric-à-brac; and, while mourning its decay and death, it would be in vain to describe what difficulties were surmounted, or what efforts were made to overcome them, in the early years of its existence. The foundation of this admirable manufactory bears date only a few years later than the introduction of porcelain into Europe; it then produced no practical workmen or artists; it had no traditional theories to improve upon; its progress, in fact, was left entirely to its own resources, and its sole examples were of foreign manufacture. Its only standard at that period were specimens brought from China and Japan. Meanwhile, the public had to be won over to the fact that examples of European ware could equal the productions of the East in cheapness and beauty; for at this period Oriental china was alone admired. Above all, the Viennese manufacturers had to contend with the mystery that encircled the invention of modern china—a secret then confined to a few individuals, who assumed the title of “Arcanists,” and who took every precaution to hide their secret,

as may be seen in any brief history of Böttcher and Meissen. At length, however, a few clever artists who worked at the Meissen factory were sufficiently keen as to obtain the secret from their employers, and these were largely bribed by German princes to circulate their knowledge. Artists or arcanists then contracted for various sums for their labour ; but rarely were they induced to sell their precious knowledge. To such causes may be attributed the complete failure of the subsequent manufactures of Munich, Limppenburg, &c., in the eighteenth century, nor can it be supposed that the Vienna establishment did not suffer from the like causes. The actual foundation of the imperial factory was said to be dated in the year 1718, and at that period was the second in Europe. Some assert that it was established by one Stenzel, a captured arcanist from Meissen, who had been enticed away by a Dutchman of the name of Claude Innocenz de Blaquier—no doubt a very innocent gentleman—war-agent to the imperial government. The more correct version, however, is that De Blaquier himself was the actual founder ; at all

events this enterprising individual had been instructed by the higher powers to establish various factories in the capital; and having previously acquired some knowledge in chemistry, besides being in some measure acquainted with the composition of porcelain—which he had obtained from the writings of Jesuit missionaries in China—he set to work to ascertain if the means of its production, both as regards quality and quantity, were obtainable within the imperial territory. Having satisfactory proof on this head, he resolved to establish a manufactory, and engaged Stenzel as one of his coöperatives. With this object in view, De Blaquier proceeded secretly to Meissen, where he contrived to scrape acquaintance with that arcanist in a coffee-house. He engaged with Stenzel in a game of billiards, taking care to lose, and thus he secured his object. Stenzel, after some slight hesitation, accepted an offer of a thousand dollars to be paid yearly, together with a house rent-free, and a carriage at his disposal, and proceeded forthwith to Vienna. Subsequently De Blaquier obtained a patent for twenty-five years, granted by

Charles VI., signed by his imperial majesty at Luxemburg, 27th May, 1718, from which period may be dated the actual foundation of the Vienna porcelain manufactory.

In this patent it was distinctly notified that the factory was to receive no pecuniary aid from government ; but an exclusive privilege was granted for the sale of porcelain, wholesale and retail, throughout the whole empire, or similar articles to those heretofore imported from the East, Majorca, or other countries.

The patent further stipulated that the ware should consist of the highest material, and should display the most elegant and well-selected forms and colours, to which end neither labour nor expense was to be spared in the endeavour to produce patterns of original forms and fancy. This done, Blaquier entered into partnership with Heinech Zerden, a Vienna merchant named Martin Peter, and an artist, Howard Hinger. The first of these was to take the commercial duties, the latter the artistic, while De Blaquier himself was to act as a general manager. They had naturally great

difficulties to contend with : the productions were not equal to the Chinese, and inferior even to those of Meissen both as regards beauty and material, taste and decoration ; and the sale consequently moderate. The manufactory was therefore compelled to produce coarser articles. To this, however, there was great opposition, as the public, accustomed to rude earthenware and pottery, were little inclined to pay a higher price for that which was not more refined, and more expensive. Meanwhile De Blaquier had other difficulties to contend with : the arcanist, not having been regularly paid according to his contract, returned to Meissen, and not only took his secret with him, but maliciously destroyed many of the models he had designed. The works of the factory were consequently suspended at the end of the second year, without a knowledge of the secret or material. Meanwhile, being a man of great energy and determination, De Blaquier endeavoured, by numerous experiments, to discover the genuine porcelain mixture ; and his efforts were finally crowned with success, though scarcely attaining the perfection of Meissen.

His next course was that of instructing the workmen. The factory was at first established in a small house belonging to Count Kufstein, opposite the palace of Prince Lichenstein, and therein De Blaquier worked with only ten assistants and one kiln. But in the year 1721 it was removed to a house belonging to Count Breuner, where a part of the establishment remained till its close. Here the workmen were increased to twenty hands, and more kilns were erected. Nevertheless the factory was not successful; and De Blaquier, after twenty-five years' labour, decided, in the year 1744, to offer it to the government. The establishment was then in good working condition, and the workmen for the most part very efficient; and he proposed to take on himself the direction and management.

At that period, however, Austria was labouring under difficulties. The young Empress Maria Theresa looked sadly on the position of her empire. Nevertheless she resolved to support the factory, which promised to give occupation and profit to her subjects, honour and gain to the state. She there-

fore commanded that it should be taken by state contract from its owner, that its debt of 45,449 florins should be paid off, and De Blaquier receive the direction, with a salary of 1,500 florins a year. Thus the factory, after many difficulties and struggles, was placed on a sounder foundation. I have already named that hitherto it had not attained the perfection of Meissen either as regards material, decoration, taste, or invention; consequently, it was obliged to produce cheap articles: add to this their designs were not original,—they copied simply the works of Japan and China very cleverly, but not in successful rivalry as to price. Meanwhile the Meissen work was day by day becoming more chaste, both as regards workmanship and modern novelty of design and execution, and consequently not only obtained the support of the Saxon court, but also that of the best artists residing in Germany, and thus gained the reputation that it has so long and deservedly maintained; while that of Vienna followed with energetic steps, but only as an imitator.

The first productions of Vienna had no mark,

and the early works are therefore difficult to discover. Still there are some in existence which bear the factory's name, together with the date of the year in which produced. Subsequently some were marked with a "W," which appears to be more ancient than the first period of Berlin, which, under the directorship of Weggler, likewise bore the "W." One of the finest works of that period is a soup-tureen and dish, which till recently was in the Convent of St. Florian, in Upper Austria, made by order from the abbot of that convent, John Förderdiermer, who died in the year 1732; it may now be seen in the Austrian Museum recently established at Vienna. Modelling of groups and figures appears to have commenced at the period when the factory became the property of the government in 1747.

Jose Wiedermeyer, an artist who had distinguished himself as a teacher of his art, became the master modeller. Count Philip Kinsky and Count Rudolph Cholert took great interest in the development of the factory, and in 1760, under government control, it advanced rapidly to that per-

fection of art it subsequently maintained. Commencing with twenty labourers, they were soon doubled. The means for their payment being found by the state, and the increased sale of its productions, 24,000 florins had been made over on account. The buildings were enlarged ; new workshops and kilns were erected.

In 1751 the Princess Dowager of Lichenstein, a princess of Savoy, made over, for a trifling sum, a house adjoining the factory, on the agreement that two apprentices named by the head of that princely house should always be instructed free of charge, and during their apprenticeship supported. In 1764 the buildings were again enlarged, and in 1771 new kilns, workshops, and laboratories were also added. In fact, from the period the manufactory became government property, its progress was rapid. I have already stated that in 1750 the workmen only numbered forty ; eleven years later that number had increased to one hundred and forty ; and in 1761 the sale of china not only reached the sum of 50,000 florins, but the factory, which hitherto had been protected

by the state, not only supported itself, but was enabled to repay 16,000 florins of its old debt.

In the course of the sixteenth year it increased still more rapidly; and at the end of the year 1770 showed a profit of 120,000 florins, having 200 labourers, who in the year 1780 numbered 320. But this rapid increase had no solid foundation. From 1740 to 1790 was the best period for figures and groups, generally termed plastic work, while from 1780 to 1820 painting on china met with great success, the subjects being generally taken from Watteau, Laneret, and Bouchet, also allegorical representations of children, fortune, and love; the latter, however, had little originality or taste.

When the factory became the property of the state, every article was marked with the arms of Austria, without colour—subsequently with a beehive with blue cross lines; this mark was retained till the cessation of the factory; and from the year 1784 to the third, or Lörgenthal period, it was also the custom to mark every piece with the number of the year. I name this, as it may be

of great assistance to the inexperienced bric-à-brac hunter, who seeks early specimens of Vienna porcelain.

On the 20th of July, 1784, the Emperor decided that the factory should be sold by auction, and although the sum fixed as a limit for the sale was not half of its real value, not an individual made an offer.

This saved the factory ; and its best period, commenced by Baron Lörgenthal, marked out an entirely new era of taste and production ; and Vienna, heretofore an imitator, acquired such powers of invention as soon to become an originator in beauty of form and design ; indeed, second to no European factory. Lörgenthal knew the great value of artistic work ; and all his productions were consequently ornamental, richly decorated, but simple and tasteful ; indeed, the art was brought to the highest perfection, while at the same time the price was reduced as much as possible. At this period artists and painters of the highest talent and public reputation were employed. The preparation of colours—a very

important question in porcelain decoration—was intrusted to a first-rate chemist or arcanist, Joseph Leithner. Under such auspices, painting on Vienna china was not to be surpassed, although considered, during the period to which I allude, not equal to Sèvres or even Dresden. There exist specimens of unrivalled beauty and consummate taste, both as regards colour and unequalled gilding. Indeed I have seen cups and vases equal to, if not surpassing, any other factory, Capo di Monte and Bueno Retiro excepted.

Thus the Vienna porcelain manufactory, as time passed on, having as it were gained the summit of perfection, gradually increased in beauty as in art. The master-pieces of Raphael and Titien, Rubens and Gerard Dow, Guido Reni and Carracci, Rembrandt and Claude, as also the works of living artists, were copied with the greatest possible perfection on porcelain, coloured from the finest selections.

Leithner continued to enrich the factory by his inventions. He used the finest gold, and brought the gilding to the utmost perfection; moreover,

he discovered a rich cobalt-blue, and a red-brown colour, which no other factory could imitate; while his glazing was remarkably smooth. In fact, every branch of the ceramic art was improved during Lörgenthal's direction, which was naturally accompanied by an equal commercial success.

Such was the position of the factory when Lörgenthal died in 1805, after having been at the head of the establishment for twenty years.

Lörgenthal was succeeded by Niedermeyer; but war soon affected the pursuits of arts, and in 1809 one hundred and fifty of the workmen left the factory to carry the knapsack.

Nevertheless, in 1818, its motto might most justly have been, "*Aucto splendore resurgam*," and when the century festival took place, notwithstanding past misfortunes and difficulties, the Imperial factory had reason to boast of its laurels, and then employed 500 workmen.

The years from 1785 to 1815 were the most flourishing; and the Vienna manufactory might then be fairly considered second to none in Europe.

From 1827, however, under the direction of Scholz, who followed Niedermeyer, it was on the decline—economy, clay of inferior quality, indifferent workmen, copies from French models, bad artists—and its doom was sealed. The splendid gilding, artistic shapes, lovely groups, and exquisite painting, all gave place to cheaper and less-refined productions; and that which heretofore might most justly be considered a manufactory of the highest art, dwindled into a modern factory of a secondary class. The expense to the state was therefore great.

Sèvres, Meissen, and Berlin have, however, now lost their formidable rival. The Vienna factory's doom was fixed by the imperial parliament, and it has disappeared from the circle of its younger Austrian colleagues, for which it was once the standard; who may profit by its history. The books on art, and all the drawings of its most successful period, many of its models, its library, its ceramic collection, were given to the Austrian Museum, recently established in Vienna, to be retained as a lasting memorial of its celebrity.

I cannot quit Vienna without recommending the bric-à-brac hunter to pay a visit to the small but admirable museum, founded from private resources and loans, since the death of the Imperial Factory ; and thence to the modern factory of Herr Fischer, in Vienna. His productions, if not equal to those of the old factory, are worthy of all praise and consideration, and his courtesy and attention are admirable. There are several good and not unreasonable bric-à-brac shops in Vienna ; others of a totally different nature, but in one and all a really good well-gilded specimen is unobtainable without considerable outlay.

Since the above was written, I have more than once visited Vienna, and I hold to the opinion that there are some specimens of Vienna china equal, certainly as regards gilding and painting, to any fabric in Europe. Only recently I had the great pleasure of beholding a tea service and tray in the collection of a friend, which was perfect, embellished with pictures, on a maize ground, with chain borders of turquoise and gold.

Berger, Funstten, Lamprecht, and Nigg, all

painted for the Vienna Factory, and their signatures are found on specimens of the highest quality. Another artist, name unknown, painted most exquisitely views with figures after Bearenberg.

CHAPTER X.

ITALY.

WITH reference to Italian fabrics, which were numerous, and many of which are extinct, Capo di Monte, Nore, Venetian, and Doccia, which still exists, were all, and still are, rare and beautiful. Genori (or Doccia), which still flourishes in the immediate neighbourhood of Florence, evinces great taste, both as regards colouring and modelling. In fact, all the fabrics in present, as in bygone days, succeeded one from another; in fact, merged into one another.

Capo di Monte, of first-rate quality, gave place to Bueno Retiro of soft frame, still more refined; both into Genori and Doccia; indeed it requires no common eye and experience to detect some of the Genori cups of the present day, with raised figures, from the old. Chelsea is also a child of Venice, one and all originating from China and Japan.

United Italy is still a fair field for the bric-à-

brac hunter, overrated as are its natural beauties and climate by the holiday traveller. Nevertheless, a few months of man's life may be passed there with considerable gratification. Rome at present I leave to the Romans. Meanwhile we have Venice, and its world-wide renown, and exquisite glass of other days, if you can get any, and highly-glazed or enamelled pottery called "Venus porselayne," of very ancient date. Its manufactory ceased in 1822, and its productions, though interesting, were never very fine: its mark a double red anchor. Naples also once boasted a factory, named Capo di Monte, and the china there manufactured is the most rare, if really good, and most beautiful of all Italian porcelain. While in the neighbourhood of Florence, Doccia (or Genori), more ancient than Capo di Monte, had, and still has, in the days we live in, one of the largest manufactories of Europe, producing even finer specimens than in the past. In Turin, or Vineuf called Turin, and in Milan, as indeed in numerous internal towns of Italy, the energetic hunter may still discover something worthy of research.

We will first make a short *séjour* at Venice—"that glorious city on the sea." The very writing of the name excites the lover of art, and creates a longing to be there. Sky, air, and water are as of yore, but those who peopled the scene live only in history. All the peculiarities which marked their nationality and independence are gone. Even the national dress, the red tabano of the men and the black soudale of the women, has entirely disappeared. Still Venetian interests remain, and will for ever. Starting from Vienna, it is immaterial which route you select, whether over the Semmerang or the Brennen. If time be no object, the lover of nature, no less than the lover of art, will be amply repaid; indeed, it has ever been a matter of astonishment to me that, while autumn holiday-seekers travel over the beaten tracks of Europe, so few are found in Vienna, or wandering amid the beauties of Lower Austria; the one, as I have said, a city full of interest and pleasant society, the other offering charms of nature which, if rivalled elsewhere, cannot be surpassed. As regards Venice, there are probably few who will read these

pages who are not aware that our own factory of Chelsea, whose productions rival nearly all others in beauty of taste and decoration, emanated from Venice ; and there is so much similarity between the best periods of Venetian and Chelsea porcelain, that it is by no means improbable that the same workmen were employed. Both manufactories adopted the anchor as their mark. Venice, or rather Murano, can boast more particularly of its exquisite glass ; but although many splendid collections still exist, good specimens, if any, are rare in the bric-à-brac market of Europe. The islands dotted about Venice in the Lagune have great interest. Among them the most considerable, and certainly the most flourishing, was Murano. It formerly possessed the most perfect glass manufactory of Europe, not only during the Middle Ages, but till the beginning of the last century. Mirrors and every species of production, in shape, colour, and design were made there with immense skill and taste. It is said that Henry III. of France, when visiting the manufactory in 1574, ennobled the whole of the workmen. If true, they really

deserved it. In addition to the beauty of the Venice crystal, it was supposed to possess the virtue of detecting poison. The cup or glass shivered to atoms if any envenomed beverage was poured in it—rather a valuable property this at the table of Alexander VI. or the Duchess of Ferrara. In addition to the glass-works the island contains a fine cathedral of the ninth century.

Murano still holds its head above the Venetian waters, and claims a race of men, descendants from the old Venetian glass-workers, who have not quite forgotten the art; nor are form, beauty, and tone of chaste colouring quite banished from their minds. They have worked on patiently, always hoping and believing that Venice would some day awake from her lethargy, and retake her position. Their hopes are so far realized. Murano has produced a workman, by name Lorenzo Pladé, who has discovered, if not precisely all, yet many of the lost secrets, while the energy, love of art, and patriotism of Salviati have gone far to revive the ancient splendour of Venetian glass. And yet beautiful, very beautiful, as are many of the

modern productions, to the real connoisseur their date is at once evident. The old Venetian glass was light, bright, and vitreous in appearance, while it displayed the richest possible colours. To a great extent all these merits are retained in the revival at Murano. Venetian glass is that which is commonly named blown glass; thus every piece is an original work of human ingenuity, and the same material is used as in the days of old.

The millefiore, the smelze, perfect imitations of agates, lapis lazuli, the rich ruby colours, the brilliant aventurine, some in imitation of old glass, some more modern imitations, are to be had in London, Paris, and elsewhere, and they are charming. Venetian enamels have always been famous, and among the peculiar productions of Venice may be reckoned the beautiful composition called aventurine, the secret of which is said to be in the possession of a single manufacturer. As regards Venetian mirrors, once unrivalled, they have lost much of their reputation, as foreign competitors produce larger sheets. The annual

cost of the substances employed in the manufacture is estimated at 7,000,000*l*. In the East there is a constant demand for beads and other articles, known as *conterie*. There are six glass-works in Turin, three in Genoa, five in Milan, thirteen in Florence, eleven in Naples, and twenty in Venice ; which fifty-eight works produce articles of the annual value of 60,276,725*l*. But, alas, it is only too true, as in china, glass, jewelry, and *bric-à-brac* generally, say nay who will : while science, as regards machinery, electricity, chemistry, and every other "istry," has advanced with rapid strides, taste, beauty, refinement, elegance of form, outline, and colour—art itself, in fact—have retrograded.

This was strikingly evident in the Paris Exhibition. Splendid as were the productions in modern glass, exquisite as was much of the engraving, beautiful as the modern Wedgwood, Minton, and other pottery, to the true lover of art they bear no possible comparison to the works of other days. I do not say that a vase, a cup, a group, cannot be produced to-day as it was half a century since, true in form and outline. I do not assert that a

glass, true in texture, graceful in form, and lovely as regards engraving, cannot now be, and is not made—indeed, the glass is probably more sparkling and clear, the engraving produced by machinery is perhaps more firm and accurate; but it is all copied from the works of the older times, and invariably is found wanting in that refined grace which does not admit of imitation. They are simply revivals. Fine art is a gift from God, as are genius and all natural talents. A person, in fact, may learn to draw—a school-girl may play a sonata, after long practice, in tolerable time, not taste; but the one would never make an artist, the other never a musician. I have oftentimes met with women positively plain in face, though not in form—the figure of a woman must be good, or she can never be elegant—whose charms of manner and grace made her far more lovely than the belle who could boast faultless features and complexion. So it is with high art; the work of an original genius bears an indescribable, unknown character, that mere manipulative skill can never attain. Let us remember, when we bewail the degeneration of

ceramic beauty and elegance, that the leading modellers, painters, gilders of the last century were all artists and men of taste—men who, nevertheless, were passing rich on five pounds a week. To find similar men in the present day, you must pay them fifty, nay a hundred; and how much would a cup and saucer, a vase, a group, a decanter, or a wine-glass cost? Why, the sum for which they are oftentimes sold at Christie's; and how few are enabled to obtain them! Would Landseer, or Frederick Tayler, or such men, paint on china? and if so, what would be the value of such ceramic treasures? And yet, in other days, what exquisite groups and pastorals after Watteau! What graceful heads of the Greuze school! No, it is too evident that modern imitative specimens may have beauty, but they lack the exquisite taste and refined art of our ancestors. And interesting and beautiful as are many of Salviati's productions, they bear no comparison, as far as art is concerned, to the finest specimens of old Venetian glass. The Murano workmen have, however, much appreciation of colour, which is absolutely necessary in

glass-work. Moreover, their climate has a colour-brightening power, which in the glow of sunlight is rarely attained elsewhere. This warm temperature assists their art, and the tradition of the place doubtless inspires the workmen with energy to obtain future fame and profit.

Milan I have ever considered not the finest, but the most agreeable city for a brief *séjour* in the dominions of King Victor Emanuel. A sight of the Duomo, as all the travelled world are aware, is worth a journey from Venice. To the bric-à-brac hunter Milan can also boast, or could a short time since, of a tolerably-stocked preserve. At all events, much interest and amusement may be derived by a day or two spent in ransacking in the various curiosity-shops. So let us leave the city of the Adriatic, gondoliers and glass-blowers. The route, like most others in Italy, say nay who will, possesses no great attractions; indeed there is a tameness, or rather sameness, in Italian scenery generally by no means enlivening—rows and rows of mulberry and other trees, with the vine clustering round the stems, and trellised from tree to tree.

This monotony, however, is somewhat broken from Venice to Milan by a sight of the strong forts which constitute the so-termed Quadrilateral, the beautiful lake La Guardia, and its distant background of mountains.

On the last occasion that chance led me by this route—the chance being the arrival of King George of Greece at Athens, to whom I had conveyed some possibly important communication—thence by the Adriatic to Trieste, my good fortune offered me a most agreeable *compagnon de voyage*, whom I soon ascertained to be interested in the search of bric-à-brac—a pastime, he pleasantly observed, which ofttimes led one without knowledge into a den of thieves, and always into some expense. “I know a friend, for instance,” he observed, “an admirable judge, who was constantly in the habit of saying to his friends, ‘If you ever hear of anything worth having, drop me a line; never mind the distance, I will go to see it. If you are confident of its merits, and can get it at a reasonable price, buy it; I will always give a fair percentage.’ Having received a letter on one occasion saying

that a valuable Wedgwood vase was to be had for a mere song—this I believe to be the usual term—he desired his servant to pack up his carpet-bag, and started on a journey of a hundred miles to secure it. Happily the game was worth the playing for; but on another occasion, on returning home, he found two very pretty vases on his table, marked with a golden anchor, decoration, birds and flowers—in fact, a charming pair of vases—with the following note: ‘Dear Fred, I think I have done you good service, inasmuch as I have secured two charming Chelsea vases, marked with the golden anchor, and, will you believe it? they cost only twelve pounds, which you can remit at your convenience, and are now beautifully produced at Colebrook dale. The price is certainly moderate—the vases lovely.’ ‘Very moderate,’ exclaimed my friend; ‘confound the fellow, I can buy them in London for half the money. Chelsea vases, indeed! Why I would have given a hundred pounds for such a pair’—no disrespect to the justly celebrated English firm which produced them, for ‘beautiful were they; but the golden anchor is a

bait which has hooked by the pocket many an unwary and inexperienced bric-à-brac hunter." I am not aware that Milan ever produced any native ceramic talent, nor was there, nor is there, a porcelain factory of any great merit; yet specimens of Venetian glass majolica, Venice and Naples china, and other Italian specimens, may occasionally be found. Milan, however, like all other great cities, has been much hunted, and the coverts are not seldom drawn blank. Much the same may be said with reference to Turin, a pleasant city on the river Po; far less cheery, however, since it ceded its dignity as the Sardinian capital to the lovely city, as most people term Florence, on the Arno, and became a mere city of united Italy. Vineuf, called Turin, had formerly a fabric of some note, of hard paste china, under the direction of Gionnetti; its mark A x and a V, the cross standing for the arms of Savoy. At Turin, I have not seldom discovered some fine specimens of Wedgwood and Sèvres—how they got there I know not.

From Turin, touching at Bologna, where, as in

all other Italian towns, the bric-à-brac hunter may rest a day with interest as regards the fine arts, and not always without success in his researches, let us pass by the grand mountainous railway, through innumerable tunnels, to Pistoia and Florence. There is nothing richer in all Italy than the Pistoiese, as the district round Pistoia is called, and it abounds with pleasant summer nooks, far cooler and more healthy than the sweltering baths of Lucca or Pisa, and other places where travellers do resort in crowds, solely because it is the fashion; and thence to Florence, where in summer time the sun shines with a vengeance, though the birds do not sing—(are there any birds?)—and life does not begin until the evening, when there is a burst of existence, which fairly astonishes every one that is not acquainted with Italy. The population is all abroad, lounging and smoking—looking and being looked at, in tight boots, kid gloves which are cheap;—of stockings I know nothing. The noise of carriages and people out so late, however, prevents all hope of sleep to those who require rest.

While in mid-winter, deny it who will, there are days and nights as cold as in the much-reviled *perfid*e Albion, with not a tenth of the indoor comfort ; indeed, during the winter past, snow not only fell, but remained in the streets, and a sight of the snow-clad mountains in the distance is sufficient to ice a bottle of champagne, and causes human nature to cry aloud for warm clothing ; and yet the invalid English leaves his native land for such places, with a far better climate and far finer scenery within a few hours of the metropolis. Still the travelling world do boldly assert that it is impossible to imagine any object more lovely than the view of Florence from any of the heights by which the city is commanded : to enjoy these views you must get there ; and I am bold enough to believe that, embracing as these views do many charms, the real lover of nature will be greatly disappointed, without he chance to find himself there when the landscape is painted with the green of early spring, or under the auspices of some peculiar sky or atmosphere, for the Arno can scarcely be called a river, save at some few miles beyond the

city, when the country, as the winding stream, is charming during the period when the leaf is on the woodlands, and water most pleasing to the eye; moreover there are no grand trees, and the celebrated casine, the public lounge and resort alike of pedestrians as cavalleros, can no more be compared to our London Parks, the Bois at Paris, or the Prater at Vienna, than a tea-garden to the Park at Blenheim. For all that, Florence is a pleasant abiding-place, and was far more so ere it became the capital of Italy, and was not more expensive than Paris. To the lover of art it abounds in interest, and the bric-à-brac hunter may find sport; though forsooth at Florence, as elsewhere, little remains, save in private houses and collections, worthy of much notice, and the price asked for anything really worth having is fabulous; as, may I briefly remark, is the cost of living, which is at least trebled. There are many bric-à-brac, or curiosity shops; perhaps the best being that of Gagliardi, who is as well known in London as at Florence, and of whom I can speak with the highest respect; would that I could do so of many

others. A visit to the porcelain manufactory of Doccia, near Florence, founded by the Marquis of Genori in 1770, offers untold pleasure to the bric-à-brac hunter. It existed previous to that of Capodi Monte at Naples, and there are still specimens of its early period, bearing the arms of Florence, and a mark apparently that of the cathedral; but they are rare and difficult to obtain. In fact, Florence can fairly boast of its production of china as far back as 1575 to 87. There are two lines of railway now open from Florence to Rome. The one by the way of Pistoia, or Pistoya, to Leghorn, Nunchetella, Civita Vecchia, to Rome; the other shorter and more direct, by Albano to the Pope's late scanty dominions. The former is far the most interesting as regards scenery, as in many parts the line touches the Mediterranean, whereas the other has little to recommend it, after passing Albano; moreover, having a desire to refresh human nature by the wayside, better provide your creature comforts, or travel by night and sleep if you can, till the Campagna bursts on your waking eyes, and the dome of St. Peter's welcomes you to Rome. Well

do I recollect one intensely hot night in June of the year past, when travelling with a very agreeable Englishman from Rome to Florence, who was utterly ignorant of aught but his native language and a few words of French, that, on arriving at Viterbo, we were parched with thirst and considerably hungry. "Fifteen minutes," said the guard, opening the door. "What does he say?" exclaimed my companion, rubbing his eyes,—we had previously scarcely spoken. "We remain here a quarter of an hour." "Thank God!" he replied, "do you speak the language?" "Yes!" "Well I implore you to ascertain if we can get anything to eat, or more particularly to drink, or I shall die with hunger and thirst." In vain we sought for a buffet or refreshment-room; there was none, or if so, it was closed. At length in despair we beheld an individual, who looked like a brigand, place a three-legged table on the platform, and then produce a basket, into which he dived and took therefrom some half-starved cold roasted fowls, some hard sausages well seasoned with garlic, and some coarse bread, and sundry little basket bottles,

common to Italy, containing a white wine of the country. In an instant he was surrounded by some score of apparently half-famished and thirsty passengers; bottles were seized on, fowls torn leg from leg, and even the horrid sausages were rapidly consumed, as if they had been delicacies from Oxford or Cambridge. The onslaught was gallant and soon over; not a vestige of meat or drink remained, ere ten minutes had elapsed, and to judge from the pleasant grin on his brigand-looking face, the purveyor was doubtless satisfied with his receipts, though I doubt much if all the consumers paid their due. In the scuffle, barring [the garlicy sausages, which were consumed by the natives, we managed to secure between us about three bottles of the wine, which was a refreshing species of sweet cider, and about two chickens, the size of large pigeons, offering about as much nourishment as a piece of dry toast—such is the gastronomic indulgence usually found on Italian railway lines, for bric-à-brac hunters or sight-seers, save at Bologna, where the food is not to be complained of. Meanwhile we returned to our carriage as

satisfied as if we had enjoyed a repast fit for Lucullus, and my subsequent friend having thanked me for my assistance, lighted a remarkably large regalia, and throwing himself back in the carriage, took off his coat and exclaimed, "Now for Florence. Yet I think I could drink another bottle of that wine. Is it too late to procure one?"

Of Rome I have little to say here, all the travelled world know that a visit there offers attractions even superior to that sought by the bric-à-brac hunter. Yet it is indeed a pleasant pastime—knowing, and having again and again lingered over every portion of the ancient city—to peep once more into the various curiosity-shops where in days gone by many an exquisite specimen of European porcelain have I obtained. Indeed chance, while hunting, enabled me some few years since, to discover a worthy grocer, who combined the sale of soap, sugar, and candles, with a sort of fanatic love for what he termed the "fine arts;" and so, having passed through his shop, which smelt strongly of pickled herrings, garlicky sausages, oil, coffee, sugar, and dips, I was one day

introduced to the upper regions of his strange and somewhat dirty abode, when great indeed was my astonishment, having mounted some sixty pair of stone stairs, to find myself in a sort of lumber—indeed, two or three lumber-rooms—the whole sides of which, from ceiling to floor, were hung with pictures of all sorts and sizes, but no great value; while floor and tables were covered with every conceivable and inconceivable article of china, of and from all nations, together with glass and bronzes, scattered in a strange medley, dusty and dirty, one-third of which articles were broken or cracked. Indeed, on first entering the room I felt so dazzled and surprised, and so full of hope that I should be enabled to obtain some prizes, that I sat me down for a moment calmly to contemplate the mass of bric-à-brac, previous to its more careful examination.

Like a scene in a play, when looked on by daylight, however, and not from the centre of a well-lighted house, so was the result; amid all this heterogeneous collection, gathered together by the grocer, there was little to attract; nevertheless I

could not but regard him with respect, considering the combination of fine taste in a man who, thus from pickles, contemplated pictures. Here and there, however, I did discover a cup or two, with marks attractive to collectors. If so be, however, the grocer charged for his sugar and dips in proportion to the amount he expected for his bric-à-brac, I fear his customers must have been either limited in taste, or rich in unlimited means. At length, however, my eyes rested on a coffee service, which I instantly discovered to be a charming set of cream-coloured or Queen's ware Wedgwood, with black Egyptian characters in relief; and I am ashamed to say immediately practised, as in some cases is permissible, or you will get nothing abroad, some trifling passes of hypocrisy—call them, out of courtesy, diplomacy—by showing an apparent indifference, which I certainly did not feel, as to my becoming their possessor; a bargain was, however, at length struck, and I carried away my treasures at a very moderate outlay. Wedgwood, however, save by persons of real taste and judgment, or by dealers who are perfectly alive as to its value, is not

particularly esteemed on the Continent; in fact, foreigners have not the taste to appreciate the most elegant of ceramic art; were it so, the Emperor of Germany would not allow very many exquisite Wedgwood vases to remain hidden from the world, and half destroyed at Charlottenburg. A few years since, when passing through Rome, I lost a chance which I have ever since regretted. This loss arose from a slight uncertainty on my part, as to their authenticity (and a still slighter purse), of four Capo di Monte figures, of some size, representing the four quarters of the world. These beautiful figures were afterwards purchased, I am told, by Mr. Gladstone, for a much larger sum than that for which at the time I might have secured them, and are now, I fancy, at Kensington. In many private houses in Rome, particularly among the cardinals and higher priesthood, there are also some very fine specimens of Capo di Monte and Sèvres, and in many instances I fancy they might be purchased for a reasonable outlay, together with various fine specimens of Majolica and Italian ware.

Naples is always associated in my mind with its beautiful bay, and its ancient china manufactory of "Capo di Monte," which, in the opening of these pages I named, as having vanished from Italy—a fact well known to all collectors. The famous factory of Capo di Monte was founded by Charles III. in 1736. This beautiful ware could not have originated from any German source ; inasmuch as, independently of its having very little resemblance to the productions of that country, there was scarcely time for the art to have reached Naples in so short a time after its discovery at Miessen.

Charles often worked in the manufactory with his own hands, and took great interest in its success. Starrien Porter, in a letter to Mr. Pitt (Lord Chatham), dated April 8th, 1760, speaking of that factory, says, "He is particularly fond of his china factory at Capo di Monte." During the fairs held annually in the square before the Palace at Naples, there is a shop or stall solely for the sale of his china, and a note was matutinally brought to the King of the articles sold, together with the names of the purchasers, on whom he

looked favourably. On obtaining the crown of Spain, he took with him twenty-two persons to form his establishment at Madrid, one of whom, ninety-five years of age, was living in Naples in 1844.

Private factories were subsequently formed at Naples, where many of the models, gold and other articles, used in the Capo factory, were stolen ; and they all closed in 1821.

In the royal establishment—*Alla Vita della Sanità*—many valuable specimens may still be seen, which will greatly interest the bric-à-brac hunter.

Au reste, save at particular periods and seasons, Naples itself has few charms. I do recollect, however, one memorable evening at the latter end of August, sitting with a kind friend on the balcony of our hotel on the Chiaga, having witnessed the glorious sun sink behind Posilipo, and then, as the deep red air of twilight became deeper in its glow, the full moon rose from the far mountains of the Sorrentine shore, over bay, and blue isle, and clear promontory, and glassy sea, filling the measure of

nature's beauty to the brim, and certainly causing me to feel at the moment that a bright moonlight night of early autumn, over the Bay of Naples, was unrivalled, and in its short existence it probably is so. I mention this trifling fact, inasmuch as travellers for the most part invariably speak of places, or generally so, from the impression left on their minds at the moment, or during a cursory visit, and had I left Naples on the morning subsequent to that delicious night, I should certainly have considered the city and its bay, with its setting sun and rising moon, the most charming spot in Europe. But I have chanced to see the bay when it was anything but calm or agreeable, and have looked on the gardens of the Villa Real when they were cold, and cheerless, and leafless; and although for the most part there is an aspect of vivid animal existence, a brightness, a life, a cheerfulness, about the city, there exist at the same time a confusion, disorder, filth, foul smells, and ill drainage, which go far to annul the romantic impressions caused by a sight of Vesuvius, the distant Capri, surrounding beauties, and charming

environs. In fact, Naples has many charms; but a residence there, save it be a brief one, will chase them away.

Numerous as are the bric-à-brac shops at Naples, small chance nevertheless is there of your obtaining anything worth having, though doubtless there, as at Rome and elsewhere, there are treasures in private houses which scarcely ever see the light of day, and the value of which is scarce known to their owners. I had once the very good fortune to obtain two most exquisite Venetian glasses, of rich ruby colour, and many-coloured flowered stems; these I entrusted to a packer, who assured me the box which contained them might be thrown from the top of Fort Angelo without fear of breakage; nevertheless they reached England in a hundred pieces; so beware of Neapolitan packing. In proof of their beauty, I was offered money for the remnants.

Majolica, or as it is commonly called, Faenza, or Raphael ware, is a fine enamelled earthenware of the end of the fifteenth century, and the early part of the sixteenth century. This pottery may be

found in more or less beauty and artistic taste in almost every European museum and collection, and much of an inferior kind can still be purchased in all Italian cities, as elsewhere. For my own part I admit no great love for this species of ceramic art, though many of the productions are replete with beauty, artistic powers, and originality. The original title of majolica, so say many authors, is supposed to have been derived from Majorca, because it greatly resembles, and was probably founded on the Moorish pottery and enamelled dishes brought from Majorca by the Pisans in the twelfth century, and afterwards by other trading cities along the coast. Whether it originated at Majorca or not is, however, of little importance to those collectors who seek it, and are capable of judging of its beauty and early authenticity, inasmuch as in the present day, in Italy, particularly at Doccia, in France also, ay, and by our own celebrated Minton, it is imitated with great beauty and artistic taste, and in some cases so truly as to defy the knowledge of the best judges. As regards Majorca being its birthplace, I have seen among

the *canards*, during the trial of the brave and murdered Admiral Byng—whom I feel pride in claiming as an ancestor—that his great love for this ware and other ceramic treasures having caused him to visit the residence of some person in that island who possessed a rare specimen, and with whom he was bargaining for the possession, when an officer arrived to inform him the French fleet was in the offing, turning to the messenger he replied, “Look here, this rare specimen is worth all the French fleet; tell Captain — to prepare for action, and the French to wait till I have secured it.” Although it is probable that the term majolica was derived from Majorca, there does not appear to be any authentic evidence of this fact; on the contrary, it appears first to have been made at Faenza, where it was principally made or exported, while some French antiquaries claim a still greater age for the French term, Fayence, and insist that it was derived from Fayenne, an obscure town in France, where there is said to have been a pottery long before it existed at Faenza in Italy. Mr. Bohn, in his very useful work, a guide to

Ceramic Knowledge, particularly to inexperienced bric-à-brac hunters, tells us that during the great majolica period, it was the fashion for lovers to present their mistresses, or their betrothed, with small ornamental pieces called *amatoria*—generally plates, dishes, or vases, adorned with the portrait and christian name of their favoured fair: many of these may still be seen in various bric-à-brac shops. They are, however, of no great beauty or value, and certainly, as far as I have seen them, do not prove the taste or beauty of the era. However, the gift of some such majolica dishes or vases as I have had the good fortune to behold, would indeed be as costly as the choicest diamond bracelet; and though majolica, or any glazed or enamelled pottery, may not be so pleasing to the eye, as Sèvres, Dresden, Wedgwood, or Chelsea, it is nevertheless of great value if good, and deeply interesting to the collector.

While in Italy, particularly at Florence, the bric-à-brac hunter cannot do better than take a trip to Leghorn; it is but a railway flight of two hours through some charming country, with the

Mediterranean at the end of it. Not that it boasts of a porcelain manufactory, nor am I aware that it ever claimed one. But there lives in that maritime town the Chevalier Andrea Campasini, a man of genius and repute, who, with his own hand, after fourteen years of labour, produced a large and beautiful model in ivory of St. Peter's, which was not only seen by Her Majesty of England, but by half the crowned heads and artistic Societies in Europe, and from whom he received the highest testimonials.

As was his father before him, so is the Chevalier an artist and a man of taste, and he has gathered around him an inconceivable quantity of bric-à-brac, filling many rooms, which he is perfectly ready to show to any one, and equally ready to sell. Among this heterogeneous mass, he has many good specimens, and I must admit that his demands are not exorbitant. For the benefit of those who desire to visit his collection, I may name that his residence is, Via San Francisco, 33.

CHAPTER XI.

COPENHAGEN.

COPENHAGEN deserves a chapter to itself.

In these days, when all the world travel, a visit to Copenhagen will not be found an unpleasant trip. To me the city is full of interest, and there are few cities the inhabitants of which are so courteous and pleasant to deal with; indeed, I have found their manners and simple habits assimilate greatly with home. Moreover, the mere fact of its being the land of our highly-beloved and esteemed Princess of Wales is alone sufficient to interest an Englishman.

For my part, I have the greatest liking for old Copenhagen china from the royal factory, which, like many others, is now dead. Pieces marked with three blue wavy lines, which indicate the Sound, and two Belts, if found, are remarkably fine and interesting. Lord Nelson was very partial to this china, and in 1801 paid many visits to the fac-

tory and purchased largely. After the battle of Copenhagen he was presented by the city with a beautiful tea-service, admirably mounted with representations of the costumes of the country, as also views of the harbour and neighbourhood. This, I am informed, he made a present to a friend in England. It has since fallen into the hands of a well-known London connoisseur, who kindly permitted me to see it, and I have rarely had the good fortune to see any specimen of greater interest and beauty. I may here remark that Copenhagen china is similar in many respects, both as to paste and painting, to Bristol china, so much the fashion, and so absurdly prized, in accordance with the present taste of buyers and sellers. The Copenhagen is nevertheless far superior, both as regards art, modelling, and painting, though only esteemed by the real connoisseur. At the recent dispersion of the Barker collection, a group of Europa and the Bull, although broken, was sold for £75. In other days, when I fancied I knew something, which something was very little, I purchased two exquisite groups—Europa and the Bull and its

fellow—not very large, but perfect and unbroken. Feeling in those days they were little estimated, I sold them to a friend for less than I gave for them. These are the lessons a bric-à-brac hunter has to learn. I have since again and again offered him double what he gave. I take it, the very fact of my having done so induces him to shut them up in a cabinet, not being a great judge, and looking on ceramic art, I fancy, more as ornaments than art treasures. I trust I may have the good fortune to visit Copenhagen again.—If so, my search will be one of no common eagerness, as doubtless in many a house and private home there must be more remaining. In addition to a china hunt, a visit to the battle-fields of Prussian or German Furioso, and the charming neighbourhood, will be a labour of love and interest.

CHAPTER XII.

PARIS—LONDON.

WE are now in Paris, for a brief *séjour*—then to the great Babylon. I need say but a few words as regards either city in connection with bric-à-brac. All the English world, I take it, who are unacquainted with the former beautiful city—for beautiful it is, spite of republicanism—had better cross the Channel and judge for themselves. A few things are wanting; a thorough knowledge of the language, a good purse, calm temper, and a courteous manner. With these acquisitions for a brief stay, Paris as a capital has no rival. A knowledge of the language is not only desirable, but utterly necessary for real enjoyment. Not such a knowledge as most people imagine they have who say they speak French, and who, wishing for greengages, ask for “Gages Verts,” and being corrected, say, “What, do you

call them 'rainy clouds'?"—which is a fact. Money is wanted, because the price of the necessities of life is enhanced even to the charging of twelve francs for an ordinary duck or fowl; temper, because no Frenchman, save he be a French gentleman, allows you to have the slightest opinion of your own, even in the purchase of a pair of gloves; and courtesy, inasmuch as a calm, courteous demeanour in the long run subdues the insolence even of a human bear.

One of the principal reasons, I take it, for the capital of France increasing in embellishment, cleanliness, and cheerfulness, made doubly so by the verdure of trees in all its streets and Boulevards during the summer, is simply, that to a Frenchman Paris is his world, a real earthly Paradise, his home, his mistress, his adoration. He goes to the seaside, "les Eaux" in due season, because not to go is to be nobody. It is the fashion, and here, as elsewhere, that odious and undefinable word carries the day; but he is as wretched at "les Eaux" as a lover who is absent from her he loves, and is never happy till he returns to the

mistress of his heart, called Paris. London is quite another city, grand, magnificent in wealth and man's labour. Her parks, the most splendid in the world, women, horses and equipages, men if you will it, when, assembled during what is termed the season, immensely superior to all beyond the Channel which divides us from the Continent of Europe. But London, to all save those who are actually engaged in business, is a mere *séjour* of pleasure, or of fashion—fashion again—or temporary habits. There are not, I am satisfied, many thousands, in that city of millions, who do not yearn to fly to the green fields, parks, and pleasures of the country in midsummer time, and the sports and home comforts of a country house, and enjoyments of a family circle in mid-winter. Thus, for all they care, Leicester Square might have remained neglected, or any other square be a courtyard; being there, they like to see the Parks bright and well filled, the streets bustling and well lighted, the shops gay; but it is not their world or their Paradise. That is found only in the home circle, whether in a castle in the centre of a noble

park, such as England can only show in perfection, or equally so in a rose or honeysuckle-covered cottage, far from the smoke of the city, or the turmoil of money-gaining and money-losing. As regards bric-à-brac Paris, as London—and I speak of them together—abounds. There are many, very many, highly respectable and rich administrators to the public taste as regards ceramic excellence, and bric-à-brac as an “olla podrida.” For the most part, dealers in bric-à-brac are children of Israel, and I am bound to believe, and do believe, that although many have commenced the trade with very limited means and slight experience, and, if you will, from the love of gain—all fair in trade—nevertheless the seller of bric-à-brac generally comes sooner or later to love his profession, and his eye and taste enable him to acquire a thorough knowledge and discrimination of the value of the highest and lowest works of art.

In my rambles during many years throughout the length and breadth of Europe, I have known men who, when I first visited their collections,

were of the humblest order, in a few years become independent, nay wealthy. This may be accounted for, in the first place, by the fact that the love for collecting the fine arts has become notorious, and secondly, that what was formerly purchased for a song, is now sold for 10*l.*, with tenfold the buyers. Thus, amid the numerous shops in Paris filled with bric-à-brac,—good, bad, and indifferent,—nothing is now to be had cheap. The man who has great knowledge may occasionally pick up something at a fair but full value; all others pay twice that for which it might formerly have been obtained. In Paris, as indeed in all the small cities and towns in France, the rage for bric-à-brac is a *furor*. Only recently I visited the curious, but dull old town of Abbeville, where there are two or three small bric-à-brac shops; in both I selected one or two trifles, the sum asked for which was most exorbitant, and yet they sell. There is nothing good, bad, or indifferent to be had in Paris, save for a large outlay, and as for Sèvres, if it is even tolerable, it is estimated as bullion. In London, as in Paris, there are crowds of bric-à-

brac dealers, with and without great knowledge ; all that is really good, however, in London deservedly commands high prices and obtains them ; ordinary, but by no means to be despised specimens, are far cheaper than abroad, and among the first-class dealers, I must do them the justice to say, a novice may purchase without fear. I have abstained from naming any dealers, because I neither desire to praise, nor give offence. Again and again it has been asserted to me by London dealers, that France comes over to purchase ; in like manner France asserts in language which courtesy dare not contradict, that England acts in like manner ; all I can assert is that, speaking from my own experience, if England does purchase in France, and gives a third of the price asked, the profit made must be *nil*. I am aware that first-rate dealers do come to Paris, and do advertise that they are coming with money in their pockets, and are ready to purchase ; and I conclude they are thoroughly aware of the effects of such advertisements, and it pays, or they would not risk the outlay of a journey and Paris expenses ; but to an

amateur collector, unless he is determined to have this or that object, regardless of expense, Paris is not his market.

Previous to the advent of railways, when continental travellers were as one to fifty, when rich men travelled for pleasure, and employés were well paid for their wanderings, much might be found by the experienced collector and purchased fairly, sometimes luckily; but that period is over, and, in those days, I conclude dealers were more or less dependent on home sales, or those who brought wares to them for purchase. Now there is scarcely a first-rate dealer who does not go or send all over Europe, regardless of expense; they are to be met with, go where you will, at Petersburg and Moscow, Constantinople and Rome; so I conclude it must pay. That it does so, however, is solely because the value of bric-à-brac is quadrupled. In London the valuable sales at Christy's, Phillips', and other first-class auctions are constant, and generally it is wonderful the prices obtained during the season, for even moderate works of art.

In like manner at Paris, almost daily sales take

place in the Rue Drouet, where every species of bric-à-brac is offered for sale—pictures of value, and mere daubs by hundreds; old and modern furniture, china, glass, in fact everything coming under the denomination of bric-à-brac, or of household goods. An occasional visit to these sales is highly amusing, even to those not afflicted with the mania for bric-à-brac hunting. Yet I must confess it is difficult for any one having a decent coat on his back to purchase anything cheaply. There appears in fact to be a combination among dealers high and low, men and women, which utterly upsets the hopes and expectations of an amateur. However, there must be some freemasonry among them; as I have witnessed the selling of a piece of china to a dealer, which I have subsequently purchased in his shop at a less price than that he paid for it at the sale; and I cannot but believe that a small capital and much knowledge of the ceramic art will soon convert the small into large; moreover, the knowledge is always on the increase, however few there may be who absolutely ever attain to the perfect acquirements of a connoisseur.

During the many years it has been my pleasure to search in every capital and town, in which I may chance to find myself, for bric-à-brac dealers, whether at home or abroad, I have had practical proof of the above assertion; for I have known men who apparently, not ten years lang syne, were in the lowest possible position, bordering on apparent poverty, in that brief space become rich. In fact their history may be written in the following lines:—

“Autrefois j'étais villageois :
On peut s'en souvenir :
Un peu sauvage, un peu surnois,
Pensant à l'avenir—
Pour te conter mes aventures,
Il faudrait peu de mots,
J'ai maintenant quatre voitures,
Au lieu de deux sabots.”

Of course I do not include the higher, and well-known class of dealers, though who dare say that they have not had their early struggles? As an illustration, however, of the rapid rise in the fortunes of those to whom I more particularly allude,—I perfectly recollect one fine summer's evening,—when enjoying the *al fresco* in company

with some ladies, and listening to the charming music oftentimes heard in the public gardens, within a circuit of a few miles round Vienna,—being accosted by a well-dressed gentleman, gloved, hatted, and booted to perfection, who, having bowed, offered me his hand; meanwhile, having been introduced to very many agreeable foreigners, whose names are at times difficult to catch, and whose faces are still more difficult to remember, I arose from my seat, returned his bow most politely, as well as the pressure of his hand, and agreed with his assertion that the weather was delightful; another bow, and he walked on with a companion, while I resumed my seat. “Who is your friend?” inquired the lady by my side; for the moment I could scarcely recollect, and replied, “I rather think he is the Swedish Minister;” on taking another look at my friend, however, as he sauntered slowly on, memory came to my aid, and I said to myself,—it cannot be—in those kid gloves and polished boots, and yet forsooth it is—and I burst into laughter. “What’s the joke, Colonello?” exclaimed an agreeable young *attaché*, who came

up at the moment. "Joke," I replied, "why I have just been courteously recognized by a gentleman in lavender kids and polished boots—whom I fancied was the Swedish Minister—and have discovered my error in the person of H—rr. You may recollect that last year we visited him in a garret, the odour of which was not agreeable, the more so as he sat in his shirt-sleeves—weather very hot—before a horrid mess of sausage and black bread, of which he urged us to partake: but we could do nothing with him as regards buying bric-à-brac; his prices were enormous." This person, I am credibly informed, was a servant in an Austrian family, and came to Vienna with probably ten florins in his pocket. I admire his energy and genius in so speedily picking up a certain knowledge of ceramic art, however I may dislike his manners and his dealings. "Confound him," said the *attaché*, "I met him not long since on the Präter, when he patted me on the back, asked me why I had not been to see him, and requested my photo for his album of European celebrities, for which in future days he hoped to

obtain a large price. No wonder he turns out so well, when he buys for a pound and sells for ten, and gets it, though I have always marvelled who gives it—but they do give it. And what is most offensive, he is always ready to guarantee everything on oath, when dealing with men who possibly have ten times his experience and knowledge; moreover, should you presume to have an opinion of your own, or examine a mark, or ask for a magnifying-glass, he appears greatly offended. Such indeed is the system pursued by the lower class of continental dealers generally—a modern piece of china is of the last century—a cup known by a connoisseur to have issued but yesterday from a fabric, is old Vienna, Berlin, or Dresden; a piece of Ginori which bears its own merits, and they are great, is always converted and guaranteed by oath, for Capo di Monte. Alas! for the inexperienced and unwary—what a fine collection they must possess! It puts me in mind of a very old story—of fresh fish—which is worth repeating, however oftentimes told—I fancy;” and throwing away his cigar, he sat down with our party. “My

tale," he added, "is brief and simple. A gentleman sent his negro servant for some fresh fish. On arriving at the fishmonger's, and handling the fish, blacky began to smell it. On which the fishmonger exclaimed, 'Hallo! you black rascal, what do you smell my fish for?' 'Me no smell your fish,' the negro replied. 'What are you doing with it then?' 'Why, me talk to him, massa.' 'And what do you say to him?' 'Me ask him what news of the sea, dat's all, and he says he don't know, he been here dese three weeks.'" And so it is with many a china cup, said to have been in the same family for years, they were made but yesterday in one fabric, painted in another, and marked and reglazed in another—for the market—in which they have been only for three weeks; but they are far fresher than the fish. Again, I well recollect coveting a Venice glass—being the possessor of its fellow—which I had seen in the window of a dealer in Italy. Having offered the price I considered its fair value, about the third of that demanded, it was refused; being, however, anxious to obtain the glass, I called again and

added five francs to my previous offer ; this was also refused. While talking with the dealer, however, a most respectably dressed woman, with evident marks of sorrow on her pale face, entered the shop, and tendered for sale a very pretty china vase, for which she solicited ten francs—about a third of its value. “No,” said the dealer, “I will give you eight.” “Nine,” replied the poor woman in distress, “and it is yours.” “Eight,” again repeated the dealer, “I will give no more.” On this, observing the anxiety depicted on her countenance, I interfered by saying, “I will take it, madam ; here are the ten francs”—fully intending to beg her re-acceptance of the china and the money. On which the worthy dealer became irate, and declared that I had no right to interfere with his business. “None whatever,” I replied, “but insmuch as you refused to give ten francs, I was perfectly justified in so doing—however, you are quite welcome to the bargain.” He thereon paid the ten francs, and the poor woman left the shop, thanking me with tears in her eyes. As soon as she had departed, I turned to the dealer, and said,

"You expressed yourself somewhat rudely as to my interference in your affairs. I certainly had no intention to do so, though you are well aware you were driving a cruel bargain with a fellow-creature in distress. In proof of my words I will give you fifteen francs for what you have just given ten for," an offer he very rudely refused, and I quitted his shop. Literally only two hours after, I had occasion to visit a money-changer's, who also dealt occasionally in bric-à-brac. On my entering his room he said, "I have got something which I think may suit you." On my asking him to produce it, behold the very vase which I had recently seen. "What do you want for it?" "Twenty-five francs,—I gave twenty." "It is well worth it," I replied, "and more;" and then I told him the little historiette which I have here written, not that it has much point, but as a simple evidence of how fortunes are commenced by the humbler class of bric-à-brac sellers—and how money is paid by the inexperienced hunter for articles of little value. A thousand such dealings are of daily occurrence, and ofttimes a prize is

obtained from misery or want, for a pound or two—not in the most honest manner—which, as years pass, is sold for a hundred; indeed it is well known that a rich buyer, determined to possess any object on which he has set his heart, or if determined from some particular fancy to possess, will, at a sale, run up the price of a moderate specimen to treble its actual value. Whereas a seller, who has capital and can await time or opportunity, will, in like manner, not seldom obtain far more. I would beg to remark, that I do not mention these facts with the slightest intention or desire to injure a class who have oftentimes afforded me great interest and amusement, and from whose ignorance I have at times not unfairly benefited, and from whom in the early days of my hunting, I have learnt many a valuable lesson. Moreover, it is said that in love, as in war, all things are fair within the bounds of diplomacy, to call it by the most courteous name; so are they, I fancy, in bric-à-brac markets, though the limit may be somewhat larger. As, however, the object of this little book is to offer the moderate experience I possess

to those whose love for ceramic art may induce them to follow in my footsteps, it is well I should, as far as may be, guard them against the difficulties and chicaneries they will encounter in their researches. I cannot leave the hunting-grounds wherein I have passed so many days and hours of interest, instruction, and delight, and which I hope to revive, without one word to those who may have these pleasures to come. Kind nature is the mistress of all art, and it is amid scenes of beauty, created by God, as in cities, that one learns to appreciate alike His manifold gifts, as the ingenuity and refined art of man. Bric-à-brac hunting, believe me, to a collector, is a most agreeable, instructive, and innocent pursuit, wherein much is found alike to gratify the mind as the eye—till at length it becomes an engrossing passion. I may justly add—that the traveller who seeks such pursuit when wandering in foreign cities, not only learns the history of the land in which he lingers, but mentally peoples it with those who lived and loved in ages past. He becomes in fact so energetic in his pursuits as to banish all others of a

less refined nature from his heart. How many are there now living, ere the advent of railways caused the facility of travel, or directors of continental excursions were born, at least as speculators, but must look back with regret to those pleasant days when few English people ever found many real travellers beyond Paris, or the now beaten tracks of Switzerland and Italy.

Petersburg, Constantinople, Berlin, Vienna, and Madrid, were then all but unknown, save to diplomats or resident merchants. The rich and real traveller, who wheeled it through Europe in a comfortable carriage, stopped at comfortable hotels, and halted here and there by the wayside, to delight calmly in the beauties of nature and the pleasures of art. In those days there were a vast number of admirable specimens of European china and bric-à-brac to be had, worthy of being exported to the collector's emporium, at a very moderate outlay. That golden era is now for ever dead and buried. Could the man who lived a hundred years since rise from his grave, and glide, as travellers do now glide, smoothly and rapidly under Mont Cenis

in a railway, I take it, when comparing the present with the past, he would jump from the window, or return to his home a lunatic. The advantage to civilization which has thus been insured by the annihilation of distance and the gain of time, who dare deny? But with all its advantages, it is not without its evils; people no longer travel by hundreds to see and learn, but rush by tens of thousands throughout Europe, without seeing much, and learning less, for the most part without knowledge of the language of the people among whom they briefly sojourn. Ofttimes, indeed, have I met with an American traveller—ay, an Englishman also—who has boasted of the short time in which he did Europe and the East: his travels having the sole advantage of enabling him to tell his friends at home that he has been here and there, and everywhere, seen this and that, crossed the Mont Cenis and the Simplon, seen the Pope and Bismark, kissed St. Peter's toe, which he had no right to kiss, and drunk no end of stuff called champagne, spent no end of money, and brought home no end of vile trash as works of foreign art. "I

calculate," says an American, "I've whipped the world as to the time in which I did Europe;" while an Englishman calmly boasts that he has seen more and spent more in a six weeks' holiday than many do in a year. Thus, a respectable dealer in the various necessities of life, in the west of London, rises one morning, and says to his wife while discussing the matutinal meal, "I have had a good season, September has arrived, we will give Jemima a treat." He rushes to his banker, draws for a hundred, which he intends to spend, and is off to Boulogne, Paris, probably Switzerland, and home again, without his hundred, or one single advantage, save that Jemima has seen "la belle France" through a railway window, and purchased a hideous head-piece called a bonnet, and has paid for it double the price for which she could have obtained a far prettier one in London. And so with all else, in these civilized and enlightened days, on the Continent. In good faith they are enlightened in acts and words, which courtesy compels me to omit. True, one travels faster and cheaper, as regards railway fares; in all else the

expense of travelling is quadrupled, with a tenth of its pleasures and advantages. Are there not many still living who well recollect, when entering an English roadside hotel, or in any county town of repute, the comfort and cleanliness within, and fair dealing by which they were surrounded? Have they forgotten the rounds of beef, the pigeons, the hams, the cold fowls, which greeted them as they entered the hostelry? Have travellers on the Continent forgotten, even twenty years back, in France particularly, the admirable table d'hôte, at three francs or half a crown a head, a decent light claret included; the excellent matutinal *café au lait*, the thanks of the garçon, or waiter, on the receipt of a franc? Surely they must do so when paying to-day half a crown for the wing of a chicken, and the same price for washing hands, which I positively did at a Brussels hotel. What have we now as regards travelling? In old England miserable railway buffets; but, even there, at least at the London stations, you may eat and drink, and be merry, at about one-half what you may on the Continent, and I have had a tolerable

experience. Indeed, throughout Italy and Germany, you are not only pillaged in every possible manner, but half starved. I speak for the most part when *en route*; as at Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden there is still to be found comfort and comparative economy, if you judge fit to practise it; but once beyond the limits of the necessities of life, and extras are ruinous. All these evils are naturally much against the bric-à-brac hunter; thousands buy Dresden vases, cups, &c., made yesterday, paying for them the value of real works of art. Cart-loads of bric-à-brac have recently gone to America, for the most part of no great beauty or value, the sum paid for which would set up a bank. And the lighter expense and rapidity of railway travelling, together with speedy communication by telegraph and post, enable the London and Paris dealers to send over their emissaries at a moment's notice, when apprised of a sale, or a chance of picking up anything which remains worth having. Nevertheless, to those who really love art, how much and how beautiful is there still to be seen, if not purchased, in European cities;

while the experienced and energetic hunter may still pick up something worthy his labour and research.

I will now conclude with "The New Curiosity Shop." Therein may be found some details as connected with the present passion for ceramic art and ceramic trickery, which oftentimes leads to fortune.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW CURIOSITY SHOP.

"Art, like poetry, is addressed to the world at large."

THE title above selected has simply reference to ceramic and other works of art as offered to the public for sale in this the year of our Lord 1875.

Specimens of ceramic art, in which I have ever taken a great delight, must have brought me in contact with men of all possible shades in the trade bric-à-brac; and if so be I have gained some knowledge and experience throughout the various countries where I have travelled, in the way of selecting the good from the bad, I have also learnt much of that which may be termed, in the most courteous words, the peculiarities of a trade little aided by theory, and which even the practical knowledge of a life, save under peculiar circumstances, will rarely bring to perfection.

It is very far from my intent or desire to write a line, nay, a word, injurious to any person who deals

in art treasures at home or abroad, while I dwell gently on the many tricks of their profession. Let me at once assert that, if there be tricksters, as there are tricksters in all trades and professions, high and low, there are not the less among the well-known respectable dealers in London, as in most of the foreign capitals, men of the highest character, the most implicit integrity, the most refined taste, and the most obliging courtesy towards those who seek to gather some knowledge from their practical researches.

Nevertheless, it is strange, but not the less true, that two-thirds, if not more than two-thirds, of these dealers in art, many of whom have risen, commencing with the smallest possible capital, and still less knowledge of their calling—a knowledge only acquired by constant practice and taste—to competency, nay, wealth.

Meanwhile, in days lang syne where there was one dealer, of whatever class or character, in the bric-à-brac line, there are now hundreds.

Ere railways intersected the land, in most of the capitals of Europe, as in many of the smaller

towns, more particularly in France, Germany, Italy, and Holland, as, indeed, elsewhere, specimens good, bad, and indifferent, were to be found, and purchased within the means of a humble lover of the ceramic art.

Dealers were then deterred by the great expense of travelling from sending forth experienced connoisseurs to every part of Europe in search of that which, if formerly purchased for shillings, now realizes pounds, and is sold for hundreds. In fact, all which comes under the denomination of *objets d'art* has risen in price here, there, and everywhere, as have coals, meat, poultry, and every article required for the comfort, luxury, convenience, and gratification of human nature; and if the advent of cheap railways at the commencement brought down high prices and facilitated the means of securing foreign works of art at a reasonable outlay, the legion who soon became purchasers opened the eyes of our neighbours beyond the white cliffs of Albion to the imagined or real value of their possessions, to our cost, and, alas! the rise is now about a hundred per cent.

In other days, I have had the good fortune, with very humble means, to obtain a charming Buen Retiro cup for five francs, the value of which would now amount to as many pounds.

One early summer's morning, while awaiting the railway at Coblenz, desiring to proceed onwards to Coburg, where Her Majesty was remaining for a short time, I chanced to wander through the streets, the shops being scarcely open, when I became the possessor of a beautiful Carl Theodore group and an exquisitely painted cup at a price for which the latter would now be scarcely secured.

In Rome, Florence, and most of the German towns in the so-called Palatine, twenty years lang syne innumerable specimens were obtained. Even at Constantinople—to say nothing of Madrid, where still some Buen Retiro, one of the finest specimens of ceramic soft paste in the world, may be met with. In Russia also, the fabric of which I fear will soon close, as in Copenhagen.

Mais tous les bons jours sont passés (forgive the remark in French), and thus has arisen the "New Era."

In fact, the taste or desire, most ardent in many persons, for classical and mediæval antiquities, as well as for ceramic specimens of all kinds, good, bad, and moderate, has increased in proportion as the world has become more wealthy and educated.

The old axiom, that demand is always met by supply, was in days gone by a fact, but no longer holds good as regards a class of objects which were of necessity at all times limited ; and thus has arisen every possible invention of modern imitators and artifice to supply the market ; and that which the tide of time has left in the museums of Europe and private collections is not likely to be greatly increased.

In fact, the only storehouses of antiquity of a classical character are buried under the earth, and now and then we read of the discovery of fragments of sculpture, bronzes, mural urns, and the works of the potter and the chemist, who in ancient times produced Greek glass, being discovered in those ancient districts of the world's civilization, Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

Apart from classical antiquities, there is another

group of art of the past, which we may call Cinque Cento art.

Whereas those who appreciate the productions of the yet later period busy themselves in collecting the old porcelain productions of France, Italy, and Germany, which are remarkable for the quality of the clay, elegance of form, and more especially of good specimens of exquisite painting, executed by artists who, at the period to which I more particularly refer, were known to bestow rare ability on the fragile surface of the porcelain.

Now it is obvious that the wealth of modern civilization cannot supply its taste from the general antique; thence has sprung up innumerable imitations of the art of the past, and thence again has arisen the "New Era." In proof of which I desire to offer some practical illustrations.

As I have already named, where in other days there were fifty seekers for art treasures—whether in porcelain, bronzes, ancient armour, swords, or snuff-boxes, it imports little,—they are now legion; in fact, those who desire now to obtain them and have the means to pay for them are

daily on the increase, and to supply the majority of such persons, hundreds of whom have little taste and less knowledge of real art, the new era of invention has sprung up, whereas many, far without the bounds of real connoisseurs, are contented with the supply which modern art produces ; whereas for those who know, or fancy they know, better than their neighbours, every possible artifice is resorted to—not to convince them of their error, but to flatter their vanity in the belief that they possess first-rate specimens, for which they pay accordingly.

Doubtless, modern Dresden, modern Sèvres, modern Wedgwood, are all very beautiful in their way, and secure prices far beyond their intrinsic value. And why so? Simply that very many persons exclaim, What do I want with old china, old bronzes, old wood carvings? those of to-day are so beautiful.

I admit the fact ; modern art in many cases is very beautiful.

Yet, permit me to ask, Is an original picture by Murillo, Raphael, or Teniers equal to a copy? Is

not a proof print superior to a common print in beauty, outline, and engraving? Is the painting of a rare old Sèvres, Chelsea, or Buen Retiro cup, or Dresden or Vienna plateau, to be mentioned in the same breath with the daubs on the modern? And, beautiful as are many of the works by Minton, or from Worcester, is the exquisite modelling of early Dresden, Berlin, and Chelsea groups to be for a moment compared to or equalled by those of the present day? No—believe me, no. Any collector of taste, who fully appreciates and understands real art from false, ignores all imitations. Yet the world must be supplied at any price, and if the real is not to be had, they must, or rather will, take that which is offered.

Not that I desire to cavil at the sums that are paid in the present era of bric-à-brac. The result appears to me simply, not only the increase of riches and education, but the fact of several of the great fabrics of Europe having ceased to exist, while others are consumptive. Thus ended the production of the richly gilded and artistically painted old Vienna—I imagine at one time not

greatly estimated by the general public or dealers ; greatly so, however, by real connoisseurs, who soon ascertained that no European china was more richly decorated : and thus a Vienna cup and saucer, which I have myself formerly obtained for fifty shillings, is now gladly bought as a first-rate specimen for eight or ten pounds. It is the same as regards Vienna plates. Some of the old ones, exquisitely painted and gilded, formerly to be had for four or five pounds, are now worth twenty pounds ; whereas the modern, though very prettily painted, are quite unequal, while chicanery is resorted to to convince the novice they are originals ; consequently innumerable white Vienna plates, having the true marks, which *are* ancient, some with the rims well coloured and gilded, are now painted in the centre by clever artists—many of them well painted—and are sent to all the capitals for sale. But the connoisseur is not to be deceived: they belong to the “New Era.”

Many, nay most, of the German fabrics of the Palatine—such as Frankenthal, Fulda, Mayence—have also long ceased to exist. I confess to never

having come across imitations or false productions. I conclude they can scarcely be imitated ; for, in my humble opinion, many of the groups are matchless in life and spirit as to face and form. And yet, I know not why, they appeared to me to be never considered equal to Dresden by dealers, though all of a sudden they appear to have taken their just place among amateurs with taste and knowledge.

The imperial fabric of Russia, founded by Catherine II., will also, I greatly fear, die the death of many others, and give place to modern art, though of late years it was rising in perfection of modelling and form ; and all now produced is sold at treble the price of former years.

The downfall of so many of these great and valuable schools of art appears to me to be caused from the simple fact that all the great fabrics of Europe which were hitherto protected by the pecuniary aid of the State in which they were born—such as Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Petersburg, Chelsea,—were to a certain degree mere treasure-houses for royal ceramic beauties, vying with one another to

produce the finest specimens. Emperors or kings could select therefrom the choicest works of art to adorn their palaces, and give as presents to adorn those of their royal brothers, ambassadors or envoys, or personal friends, for which the State may be said to have paid.

So was it at Sèvres even during the late empire ; so is it, if I am not incorrect, to the present day at Berlin ; kings, queens, and emperors being supplied with the best, the public get what they can. In naming that public, however, I by no means allude to a public who require a sixpenny cup and saucer for matutinal use, but the public with long purses, who could afford to purchase at high prices, and who appreciated and had knowledge of art ; and from the collections formed in those days, as from private sources in later years, some of the finest specimens of ceramic art have been dispersed throughout the world. As that world and its ways advanced, however, in the era of reform, even that of porcelain fabrics commenced.

Prices being high, and purchasers being less numerous, what was intended as a means of

securing the perfection of art, at a period when every country vied with its neighbour, not only to obtain beauty of form, modelling, colouring, and gilding, as also the very best artists and workmen, discovered that if the public could be supplied at a cheaper rate, and inferior articles would sell and become remunerative; add to this the great decrease in custom duties.

Formerly, if I am not in error, Dresden, Sèvres, English, and other porcelain entering Russia paid heavy duties; the same as regards Vienna. The people of those countries, therefore, fell back on the produce of their own fabrics; and as regards Vienna—the painting and gilding of which were beautiful—is now scarcely to be had at any reasonable price; and fabrics originally intended to produce works of the highest quality, are now becoming mere china-shops; and every possible artifice, both as to colouring and false marks, is resorted to to mislead the public—by modern art—converted into old; and in many instances so cleverly, that none but the most practical connoisseur can detect it.

On one occasion a dear old lady, who fancied herself a good judge of ceramic art, showed me two groups which she had recently purchased, in accordance to her idea, at a very moderate outlay. "Come," she said, "and look at my new possession!" At the moment, I was not aware as to whether it was a pug-dog—to which race of animals I knew she was partial—or a diamond bracelet. "There!" she said, pointing to two groups on the mantelpiece of her boudoir—"Are they not loves? Look at the modelling, painting, and colouring!"

"No, my dear friend," I frankly replied, much to her indignation; "they are merely ordinary modern Dresden figures—pretty, but not works of art: not bric-à-brac."

"Not works of art—not bric-à-brac—not old! You are always harping on the old. What of that, if the modern is equally attractive with the old?"

When she became a little calmer—having, in fact known her from childhood, as being her grand-nephew—I ventured to say, perhaps with a little hypocrisy, "Harping on the old! well, are you not old?—and yet I admire you far more

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than half the absurdly-dressed girls of the present age!"

But "badinage apart," there are hundreds of would-be connoisseurs who use the same language. Well, permit me to say, with all due diffidence and admiration for modern art, that it is not solely because a work is the produce of ages past that causes its value to the collector, but the chasteness of form, the taste, the modelling, the painting—all far superior to that of the days in which we live, which are days of money-making, make it how and when you can. In fact, "humbug," though not an elegant word, is the order that works out the machinery of life.

True gold will pass through any ordeal; but wares which come out of the "New bric-à-brac shop" will barely find their resting-place in the collection of one who can select gold from pinchbeck. It is only great-aunts with long purses who are ready to clear the market—persons who know nothing of what they buy, whether pictures or china, so long as they purchase marks or names.

Again, there are two odious words in the English

language—Fashion, and Luck; the former I despise, the latter I have no faith in. Who on earth decides the fashion? Ladies once wore bonnets; what is the name of the articles which now disfigure their heads, and set the beauties of nature at defiance? The most charming face in Europe could not support the fashionable composition of the day. I suppose I must use the word. Only yesterday I saw on the head of one who, I may suppose, was a lady, seated in a carriage on the Champs Elysées, a sort of basket, or demi-basket, of artificial grapes, cherries, and flowers combined—in fact, hideous in appearance, and grossly inelegant. But what avails all the writing in the world; fashion, so called, will be followed by a cook-maid or a countess without taste, even to the expense of her virtue. Unhappily the same word fashion interferes as regards works of art. To-day Chelsea or Worcester may lead the van, to-morrow Sèvres, Wedgwood, or Dresden, Vienna or Berlin, what avails it, save to the seller, who for the time being sells with greater profit, the buyer pays more. Yet, believe me, high art will always meet

with its reward. Nothing can surpass fine old Chelsea and Buen Retiro ; while exquisite groups of Frankenthal and Fulda, a few years since looked on fastidiously, are now scarcely to be had for love or money, even if it be much money. Fine and well-gilded specimens of Vienna and Carl Theodore—the name of the fabric of the Elector Palatine—never greatly in fashion, save to those who were really connoisseurs, are daily becoming more scarce among dealers at home and abroad ; and there are no more life-like figures than those emanating from the German fabrics which have ceased to exist ; and so is it with everything worth having ; and thus the “ New Era.”

I chanced to be at Versailles during the occupation of the Prussians, where formerly, as being a resort of the aristocracy of all nations, there was one or more very fair bric-à-brac shops ; as also at St. Germain's ; and I fancy they are still in existence. As, however, the supply of good art treasures diminishes, so modern imitations are palmed on all ignorant seekers of art. At the former city I was fortunate enough to obtain two

or three old Sèvres cups, as the words go, for a trifle ; it was in fact, in days gone by, a first-rate market for the bric-à-brac hunter ; and, among other treasures, fine old Louis Quinze clocks were attainable.

Being at the latter place one fine summer's evening with a friend, we strolled through the town, when he purchased for a very small sum, as I own to having judged at the time, two very pretty vases marked with the French horn, or bugle, as purporting to be Chantilly ware. At the moment I envied him his possession ; on a closer inspection, however, notwithstanding their beauty, they proved to be modern, and quite unequal to old Chantilly. Indeed, I find I can now obtain any number of them. I refer to these facts, simply to prove how careful a novice should be if he desire to obtain objects worthy of his collection and worth his money. There are dealers in London who are rarely deceived, from long practice and constant experience ; but the most clever may make a mistake.

Napoleon never uttered a truer sentiment, viz.,

that we were a nation of shopkeepers ; and shop-keeping, I regret to say, in this the year 1875, is marvellously easy in the matter of honesty. In a gallant regiment, in which I had the honour of serving under the command of a noble lord,—one of the best officers and kindest of men—the messman once complained that many of the officers had not paid their mess bills regularly ; consequently we were called one morning before the colonel—in the presence of the claimant—and thus he was interrogated :—“ Has Captain —— paid ? ”—“ Yes, my lord.” “ Has Lieutenant —— ? ”—“ Yes, my lord,” “ Has Cornet —— ? ”—“ Well, my lord, he owes me a trifle for soda and b—s.” “ Then why on earth did you request me to bring these gentlemen here ? ”—“ Well, my lord, when I comes face to face with them, I finds it necessary to have a trifle of honour to spare.”

In fact, I believe several owed him something, but, when face to face, he gave way to self-interest. Such is the “ New Era.” I am rambling, my readers will probably say, from the subject of my shop. Not so.

It is a dark and gloomy night in what is generally termed the genial month of May. I am, nevertheless, reposing in a comfortable arm-chair, in company with a true friend and agreeable companion, before a cheerful wood fire—for the early, or, rather, late, spring is intensely cold—in our pleasant apartment in one of the so-called aristocratic streets of a city which, under the Empire, had no rival, alike as to order, beauty, and cheerfulness. Alas! *ces beaux jours*, at all events for the time being, *sont passés*. And yet, and yet—the trees on the Champs Elysées, and the Tuileries are still as luxuriant and green; the birds sing as merrily; the children watch with infantine interest the gambols of Punch, and take turns on the roundabout. Nature, in fact, cares little for Empires or Republics. Man alone interferes with God's works, and allows his odious ambition, or thirst for blood or gain, to stain that which he can deface, but never destroy.

"How silent it is to-night," I observed, in a street in which formerly carriages were rattling till dawn. "What is the cause?"

"The cause, I take it," he replied, "is simply that all is more or less changed in this fair city. France lives, or rather exists, under a republic, formerly it luxuriated under an empire. Republicans are not much given to balls and late suppers, I take it; if so, they prefer walking or driving in fiacres; thus the roll of carriages disturbs not the quiet of the night."

Moreover, there are other changes as regards the comfort of man. The gastronomic art, in its own line equal in science to the ceramic art, to which, moreover, I shall show it has great relations, is on the decline; and, I regret to say, French cooking, once so celebrated, with rare exceptions, is defunct. The dinners of days gone by are few and far between, and the restaurants, once so renowned, are now for the most part expensive and indifferent.

Yet, believe me, there is something very imposing, nay agreeable, to a refined mind, in the aspect of a well-arranged dinner-table.

Glass thin and brilliant, silver bright and old, clustering waxlights, ceramic treasures, and exotics—the silent attendants who come and go noiselessly.

The table, in fact, ought to be perfect—the claret cease to be claret, but a libation, and the dining-room airy and charming. The most intellectual, indeed, are subjugated by the influence of such a repast.

For my part, one of the best, if so be the simplest and most agreeable, dinners I ever enjoyed in my life, took place in a small but elegant cottage in one of the most charming spots of which England can boast so many. We sat down only six: host and hostess, three friends and myself, all on terms of more than common friendship and intimacy. The *menu* was very simple, the centre cut of a crimped Severn salmon, fresh to perfection, rosy and curdy, a cool cucumber, from the frame to the table, a leg of lamb done to perfection, green peas and asparagus, four roast quails, a lobster mayonnaise, and apricot fritters, the windows of the room being open to a small but lovely flower-garden; the oil of the sherry trickling on the glasses, and the aroma of the claret vying with the scent of the roses. But what is all this as connected with the "New Shop"? Simply that

the dinner was served on Dresden china, painted after Watteau, which had been for fourscore years in the possession of the family of my host, while the centre piece, of Venetian glass richly traced by the diamond, containing roses yellow and damask, was priceless. In fact a combination of simplicity and refinement, not to be surpassed, but most agreeable; the china far more pleasing to me than the most massive silver, and incomparably superior to the oft-times modern vulgarity of an every day ill-chosen dinner-service.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW ERA.

AND now let me return to the New Era. Some years since I was the amused listener to a conversation, let me rather say a lesson given to two English ladies by an Israelite dealer, if memory fail me not, at Weisbaden.

"What is 'Frankenthal'?" said the younger, taking up a cup marked with the C and F interlaced, surmounted by a crown.

"It is, madam," said the dealer, "the name of the fabric of the Elector Palatine, more ancient than Sèvres; indeed Sèvres copied from Frankenthal; the Germans, to render them only justice, produced admirable specimens of rare ceramic art."

The ladies listened as if the man was speaking Chinese. "Frankenthal,"—they had never heard the name; Sèvres and Dresden were about the limit of their knowledge even as to porcelain.

“And how do you know one class of china from another?” said the elder.

“By the mark, but far more so by the eye and touch, and practical experience,” he replied. “All fine, rare specimens are for the most part marked; but even marks from the same fabrics vary according to the era of their production and value. Frankenthal, as I have shown you, bears the cipher and crown, old Dresden crossed swords, the Marcolini period headed with a star”—(and modern also, I observed to myself).—“Chantilly is known by a French horn, Venice an anchor, Berlin a sceptre, Mayence a wheel. A, for Antoinette, surmounted by a crown, called *porcelaine de la Reine*. In fact, during the eighteenth century all the states of Europe rivalled one another in the production of the most chaste works of art. Fine pieces of Chelsea were represented by a small red or gold anchor, adorned with charming groups after Watteau. No wonder, therefore, they were, and are, priceless.

“In those days the art of painting on china was exquisite, as witness some of the works of Sèvres,

Buen Retiro, and Dresden ; and, elegant as much of it is in the present day, the past was a reality, the present is a fiction, and first-rate works are daily becoming more rare and expensive."

"Then what does your shop contain, Meinherr, for which you ask so much?" added the lady. "I thought I knew something of old china ; it appears I know little or nothing."

"Excuse me, madam, less than nothing : less than I knew when first I invested my whole capital, not twenty pounds, in a Sèvres vase that I sold for a hundred, and which was the foundation, at least of a competence, to a man in my position. You ask me *how* I gained knowledge of the art ? By reading, attending sales, watching and marking the opinions of others ; losing to-day by knowing too little, and believing I knew more than my neighbour ; gaining the next, having found out my error by practice and care. The eye can only be educated through the mind.

"The articles I have for sale are neither the worst, and certainly not the finest specimens of ceramic art. Some are equal to the past, most superior to the

present. Yet, be assured, years of experience, practice, and theory are not sufficient to obtain that perfect knowledge necessary to select the good from the bad, and you may die ere you obtain it ; although there are men who have risen from the most humble position in life to far superior practical knowledge than those of a higher class who fancy they know more. Do you visit Paris, madam ? if so, attend the sales in the Rue Drouot ; I fancy they are almost daily in the season. If a known dealer bids a hundred francs for a work of art, you may safely bid ten more ; though, forsooth, there are some persons who know where to place their purchases at any price, in these days of Manchester millionaires."

I confess to having felt so interested in the remarks of this dealer, that, having secured a few moderate articles, I subsequently paid him many visits and gained from his knowledge and kindness some valuable information. If memory fail me not, he stated that he formerly kept a small grocer's shop ; but, having become by chance the owner of an elegant and well-shaped majolica vase,

—or jar—the ceramic passion touched his heart, and the produce of the sale of his humble shop was soon converted into bric-à-brac.

As regards myself, the writer of these pages, I am very very far from believing that I know much, though the voice of art has induced me not only to study it theoretically, but also to follow its pursuit in every possible manner, in order to gain knowledge ; visiting exhibitions and choice private collections, diving into out-of-the-way regions in cities abroad and at home, and never passing the most humble shop without peeping into its recesses.

On the very day I write these lines I have received a letter from a friend, asking me to tell him what the letters S and A, on a fine piece of china amount to. My reply was, no one, whatever his knowledge, practically or theoretically, can tell until he sees and handles the china ; it may be soft paste, it may be hard, it may be the production of to-day, or that of ages past. S A may only be the mark of the painter, or stand for Swansea ; and I take this opportunity of naming to novices who seek to collect porcelain (not that

all the works on the subject may instruct), and other foreign works, though prices, as in most sales, are by no means to be relied on as to the actual value of the specimens sold ; simply that the possessor of a well-known collection often obtains fabulous sums, whereas those of one unknown are frequently sacrificed.

As regards the *ci-devant* dealers of Weisbaden, so is it in all the great capitals of Europe, for, although there are unquestionably men of the highest respectability, integrity, and knowledge, who probably commenced their career as art dealers with some capital, which capital has been doubled, nay trebled, by experience subsequently gained, there are hundreds, at home and abroad, who have commenced the trade as did my friend, with a majolica vase, or Dresden teapot.

Not ten years since, I recollect a dealer at Vienna whose whole stock and capital would not have been valued at probably two hundred florins, whose shop may now be estimated at thousands of pounds ; while his wife, whom I have seen sweeping up the floors and watching the *pot au feu* in

preparation for a very scanty meal, now dresses in silk attire, and learns English and music. And why not, if they have been honestly gained? Alas! that is not always the case, as I have endeavoured to show, from the utter want of knowledge of two-thirds of purchasers.

At Berlin it is the same; dirty little shops, the contents of which appeared as valueless, have risen in a few years into magazines containing great value. In fact, I greatly offended a bric-à-brac dealer at Berlin, perhaps unkindly, whose shop was in the year '63 one of the most humble, in '75 one of renown. Paying him a visit one morning, I found myself in the presence of a lady anxious to purchase two Dresden figures, undoubtedly very good ones; the price he demanded two hundred thalers; on hearing this, perhaps incautiously, my face, I fear, said francs; indeed, I spoilt the market, not wishing her to be swindled. Having selected a very choice Frankenthal cup, he snatched it out of my hand most rudely, adding, "I will sell you nothing!" I confess that the spirit of an Englishman took possession of my hands, but

a moment's consideration, however, and I dropped happily into the spirit of a gentleman, and left the shop without breaking the cup on his head.

Nevertheless, this individual in former days was indebted to me, or rather received from me many thalers and some good advice, but he is now possibly a millionaire. In fact many dirty little shops ten years since are now filled with art treasures; and so it is in our own dear England.

Meanwhile, it has always appeared strange, in this era of advertisements, how rarely one appears from a bric-à-brac dealer, though I have seen in foreign capitals advertisements emanating from dealers from afar, stating their hotel or temporary resting-place and readiness to purchase; and was once greatly amused at seeing a gaudy advertisement framed and glazed in a public resort which delicacy prevents my naming; certainly as 'cute a means of publicity as could possibly be.

Indeed, the history of many bric-à-brac dealers would be highly interesting. Couriers and waiters, grocers and shoemakers, have left their former

trade for the far more refined and, I conclude, profitable one of art-collecting and selling. Indeed, if pursued with knowledge and taste, I doubt very much if collecting works of art is not one of the best investments of the present day. For my part, I should enjoy a walk through the rural districts of old England, as abroad, solely in search of ancient china and old carving; and assured am I that in many a humble cottage, as in many a substantial farm or costly mansion, there could still be found specimens of great value that might be secured, as it is said, for a song. I was recently passing up Hill Street in Richmond, Surrey, when I observed that which I had never previously seen even in that beautiful and much-frequented locality—a bric-à-brac shop, which I entered, and was kindly accosted by the owner, a highly respectable and obliging man. The shop contained several good specimens, a few moderate figures in Dresden and Chelsea, some old clocks, pictures, &c.

“I think you have done well,” I remarked, “in setting your tent in this locality, as you stand alone in the trade. Have you been long a lover of

art?" "Yes," he replied; "but I have, in fact, as yet no great experience, and less capital." "Never mind," I replied, "persevere. Your shop is well placed, and you will get on; but remember that the surest means of gaining that experience is not to suppose you know better than your neighbours, but to gather honey from every 'ceramic bee' that enters your shop. The most humble collector or purchaser may suggest something new; the wisest become wiser."

Mr. Acton, as I felt he would, has risen in the world of ceramic art. The father of this highly respectable dealer, now commencing his career in the bric-à-brac line, was a well-known clever surgeon,—a man of the highest attainments, an antiquary and collector of no common order; and his son, who is also a man of good education and attainments, will, I trust, succeed in a pursuit which is one of refinement and interest.

When the late King of Bavaria converted Munich into an art museum, he may be said to have created a group of imitating artists, who reproduced the fresco drawings of Pompeii with marvellous grace

and accuracy—so much so, that some years since an English nobleman of refined taste, when visiting Naples, on entering the shop of a classical antiquary, was struck with the beauty of a number of fragments of fresco paintings on that peculiar hard cement which the Romans used for lining their public baths and ceilings, and which did not escape the appreciation of Raphael, as we know from the mural decorations of the Vatican. Charmed by the beauty of these pleasing fragments, he became the possessor of a number of them as genuine works of past centuries, and took them to England.

The drawing of the figures was characterized by the graceful outline of the antique, the colouring was harmonious and effective, and all who saw them pronounced them to be valuable art-treasures. Nevertheless, they were imitations. The fraud was practised by artists of no ordinary merits. A German painter, thoroughly versed in working fresco, who had purloined fragments of the cement from old buildings, taking for his text the paintings discovered at Pompeii, was thus enabled to produce his works as original designs.

It was only by chemical application that the owner of those works of imitative art discovered they were modern. There is, in fact, a class of artists, principally Germans, who have arrived at such a state of perfection in imitating the paintings of Roman antiquity, that it becomes extremely difficult even for the most practical eye to recognize the fraud ; but the instances of rare and beautiful imitation, as many of them undoubtedly are, are legion. I am well acquainted with a female artist in Paris, who is, I believe, the owner of a small fabric, from which every species, cup or vase, is produced in soft paste ; and, taking advantage of some of the cleverest painters and decorators from Sèvres and elsewhere, she can secure imitations which the keenest eye and taste can with difficulty detect. In fact, having one morning paid her a visit, she showed me a lovely real Worcester vase, richly painted with birds and flowers, cracked through the centre ; and then, to my astonishment, handed me a pair which bore the exact copy of the Worcester mark—so beautifully painted, and so exact in form and character, that none but first-

rate dealers and collectors could have possibly told the difference, adding that she could imitate everything.

Well, I admit these modern productions were beautifully painted, beautifully gilded, beautifully glazed ; but, on a closer inspection of the old and the new, there was a wide difference ; not that they were not valuable, not that they were not works of art, but that hundreds of these imitations are sent to England and elsewhere, and are sold to the unwary for true specimens of the art of other days, which is simply a delusion and a fraud.

With reference to Venetian glass, I may here say a word. Venetian glass of the early period—thin, light, and diamond-cut of the sixteenth century—is rare, beautiful, and valuable ; and who dares say that that of Salviati in Morana, in the days we live in, has not beauty and rare artistic taste ? But then it is not Venetian glass of ages past, and the colouring and artistic taste of that period has not as yet been quite approached. It is not, in fact, what the collector of pure art calls Venetian glass ; it is simply a beautiful and admirable pro-

duction from the Venetian fabric of Salviati, who has done much for the world at large, and merits his reward. It is the same with modern Wedgwood. Many of the specimens are lovely, and doubtless of value ; but I deny their being equal, or ever will be, to the old in outline or refinement.

Nevertheless, it finds its way to foreign capitals, though Frenchmen scarcely appreciate its beauty and much of it is so fine, so clear in outline, as even to come near the old. Meanwhile I repeat that humbug is the oil that works the machinery of life, and thus we live in the era of the "New Curiosity Shop."

I have now to apologize to the author of a quaint and well-written article which I read, I know not where, whether in book or journal, as I do all connected with the art which comes under my notice, headed "Bric-à-brac," that I extract some of his information.

"I visited a shop," says the author, "which was at first little better than a 'dolly-shop,' where cooks disgorge the kitchen-stuff. There were Indian shells, cracked plates, old ironwork. Then

came kitchen furniture and chipped porcelain. Presently, the nature of the merchandise improved. The little Dutch gentleman who smoked at the door very often on summer evenings, became far more alert and less servile. Pictures succeeded old frames, porcelain replaced the cracked plates, the hovel became a shop—the shop a museum.

“The windows were washed, the interior swept; the little Dutchman, surrounded with masterpieces, became an experienced connoisseur; he had, in fact, trebled his capital, and is now feared in all the auction-rooms between Knightsbridge and Mile End. Bric-à-brac hunters know him, and ladies who search for bargains seek him out to their cost.

“The only way of approaching him with safety is under the mask of a ‘collector,’ or as an erudite in bric-à-brac, seeking information or exchange. Exchange being the bric-à-brac seller’s darling mode of doing business, he will not (I most justly believe) cheat you when he sells or buys; but when he exchanges he flays you alive; he plucks out the very smallest feather of the pigeon’s wing.

“‘You have noticed my little keenness,’ he once observed, after some pecuniary transaction concluded to his satisfaction. ‘Times is hard, put de honest dealer catches the customer in time. I began by running errands for the curiosity-dealers in Wardour Street, and on the Boulevard Beaumarchais at Paris I saved and saved—and you see where I am. Only Israelites, Scotchmen, Dutchmen, and Auvergnists, can do much in the bric-à-brac line. I know you gentlemen deals with lots of Englishmen with cash behind them; you’ll find it’s always a Jew, a Hollander, or a Scot that manages the business and pockets the profits. Our shop trade and the attendance at sales are the easiest part of our business. The difficulty is in buying what other people cannot get at. Look at those Sèvres cups, *pâte tendre*. A man gets more for a nameless Italian stiletto; but he must have been a shrewder fellow than half your ambassadors, take my word for it. You must be able to do more than wheedle country servants and country gentlemen, in our line.

“‘A bric-à-brac dealer of my age is a regular

archæologist. To make money, he must know a good deal about sculpture, architecture, jewellery, the ceramic arts, carving, and a dozen other matters.

“Does it not take a clever man to discover the real Holbeins, Murillos, Durers, Del Pernitros, and the rest, among fifty thousand old pictures exhibited in London during the year? How many university men know anything about old Trentreulhed, or any other works of art in china?

“The princes of the bric-à-brac trade travel over Europe. The greatest market for curiosities proper is Paris. Pictures are only sold in the three cities, London, Rome, and Paris. The masterpieces of every city are marked on their maps of Europe; and agents watch the markets and buy up the desired objects cheaply, by means of innumerable ruses, auction knocks-out, and misrepresentations. See the treasures they hold!’ the little Dutchman remarked.

“Raphael’s two missing paintings are in the hands of a dealer; so is the original of Giorgione’s Mistress—what the world sees are copies; so is

Titian's masterpiece "Christ taken to the Tomb," painted for Charles the Fifth. Their artistic knowledge would shame the greater part of your official museum-keepers. They laugh at your galleries. We know the best day and the best hour for viewing such-and-such a piece; while the dilettanti gentlemen judge through an eye-glass Rembrandts and Watteaus on the selfsame day.

"'It is true that the cleverest of the bric-à-brac dealers are not over-scrupulous in their transactions with the unwary. They buy up old furniture, knowing or making guesses, of the valuable contents of drawers and cupboards.

"'A friend of mine,' the Dutch dealer volunteered, with a twinkle in his Jewish eyes, 'got hold of an old buffet the other day for three pounds—the wood carving was worth the money—and found therein a Pompadour fan, painted by Watteau. I found,' he added, 'Spanish doubloons in an old desk, a few months since. Our best customers are all nearly the highest educated and tasteful commoners, Russian princes travelling solely in search of bric-à-brac, English peers, German bankers; and,

I may add, that many of the connoisseurs are not more scrupulous than the curiosity-mongers in their transactions, inasmuch as they employ the dealers to do not a little of the large amount of dirty work performed in the commerce of so-called articles of vertu.' "

Well, all this is no doubt to be regretted ; it is nevertheless the fact ; and dealers of the present day, who combine to palm off modern works as rare and old on the many ; dealers, more particularly in Paris, who demand fabulous sums for inferior works of art, and get them—from whom it is difficult to say, save from Americans—belong to that class which owns the "New Era," steeped in democracy—the curse of all refinement in their calling.

Modern patronage makes the artist, *n'importe* whether of porcelain or whatever works of art, simply a commercial man ; and if he studies the taste of the day, he will be sure to get rid of his productions.

He must, however, be a free-trader, often with bad taste, and can only afford to be a protectionist when he has made his fortune.

I commenced this paper by saying: "Art, like poetry, is addressed to the world at large:" the pursuit of it has also many advantages; it refines the mind, gives pleasure and instruction, and, moreover, is the least egotistical of tastes.

The higher order of art, as I wrote some few years ago, is, moreover, the handmaid of religion, and many of the great masterpieces which adorn the collections of Europe owe their origin to the inspirations of piety, and have been for centuries, and are still, powerful aids to meditation and devotion. Art has, and ever will have, a high and noble mission to fulfil.

Moreover, it is not the mere graceful work of art on which you look, whatever the pleasure which it excites, that is alone valuable; but the knowledge gained therefrom of the early art history of other countries, which adds to the ceramic collector's gratification and instruction.

In conclusion—though far more might be written on the interesting subject of ceramic art, time and space admitting, I would briefly desire to name that, being recently in the capital of the Czar, I

purchased a few figures, for the most part representing the characteristic costumes and, I may add, failings of the Russian lower class.

They are modelled in somewhat rough porcelain, unglazed but painted; the costumes, however, are "true" to the very facts, and the lifelike expression of the faces is inimitable. What then? I showed these specimens to a clever dealer, and he perfectly agreed with me in all I said on the subject; adding, however, "They are Russian, and, notwithstanding the great interest they possess as most graphic specimens of modern art in Russia, I do not think they would remunerate an English dealer; as none but those who really esteem clever modelling would purchase them, save as curiosities."

Thanking him, I remarked, "They will do well to place in the 'New Bric-à-Brac Shop,' which is at hand."

It is impossible to close these pages without a final word with reference to the new fashion, or whatever it may be termed, as regards the present mania—not, it appears to me, so much for works of art as for buying and selling.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

I THEREFORE draw my sword to battle against the absurd taste for that which is called old English china, or the collection of marks. Let us endeavour to substitute a better feeling and thereby obtain a better specimen. He that desires to obtain a ceramic collection in proportion to the value of the money which he has paid for it, has the pleasure to himself, and others who are permitted to enjoy a sight of his gathered treasures, must look for design, drawing, modelling, and colouring, and not depend on marks, recollecting that a forgery is always marked. I say this for the benefit of the novice; one who really understands and loves pure art and beauty is not easily deceived. For my part, I believe, having seen and examined as much or more ceramic specimens than many collectors both at home and abroad,—and I honestly

confess that in other days I have been more than once taken in by forged marks ; but of late I have learned the lesson of looking solely to art and beauty, outline, correct modelling ; and then I care not whence the specimen comes, whether from Petersburg or Nantiglo.

Meanwhile my cottage home is surrounded, I may say, with lovers and collectors of ceramic art. In their collections you will find no printed cups, whether the marks be Plymouth or Worcester, Chelsea or Bristol. I would be permitted in all courtesy to name Mr. Saunders, of Ravenscourt-terrace, Hammersmith, the possessor, not only of a most valuable collection* of splendid Chelsea figures, probably unequalled elsewhere ; but also the owner of some very fine Bueno Retiro and Copenhagen china, in my humble opinion, equal to the finest Dresden.

Mr. Oriel Walton, of Twickenham-park, has also a very charming collection, well selected,—not an article of rubbish among it. Mr. H. Bohn's collection † at Twickenham is grand in amount,

* Recently sold.

† A portion also recently sold.

selection, and value; as also Dr. Diamond's, of Twickenham, who unfortunately lost some of his finest specimens at the fire in the Alexandra Palace. Nevertheless a charming collection might still be weeded from the mass of ceramic art of which he is the fortunate owner. Then let me name some of the leading dealers in London, men of the highest respectability and honour—such men as Davies of Pall Mall, Myers of New Bond-street, Wareham of Castle-street, and Interlacken, King-street, St. James's-square, and numerous others. I take it such men are not readily deceived by forged marks, nor will you find aught in their shops that is not fit to decorate the mantelpiece of a palace, or the boudoir of the lady of your love.

Now let me turn to the vast number of ordinary dealers, but doubtless very honourable men. In giving my humble opinion in reference to ceramic art, I should grieve to think that I had written a word tending to injure the sale of their articles, or in any way endeavour to question their knowledge. But when I enter a shop (of which there are scores), and find dozens of sheep, lambs, and shepherds of

what is termed Staffordshire ware, modern Derby, and Worcester, marked Salopian cups and saucers ; and last, though not least, that which is designated by the name Lowestoft, which I fully believe, in nineteen cases out of twenty, to be china manufactured and decorated in the East, from 80 to 100 years since ; I own it appears to me strange that such articles should ever obtain a remunerative sale : but they do sell ; and why so ? Solely because this rubbish, looked on as English works of art, is in the fashion, as are ladies' high-heeled boots, which cramp the toes and destroy the most delicate foot and ankle.

Now in that charming rural town called Richmond, there is a dealer to whom I have already alluded, and for whom I have a great respect, simply because he is an honest man, and no humbug. Again and again, when returning from foreign parts, have I shown him specimens of Bueno Retiro, Copenhagen, Vienna highly gilded, a china for which I confess great admiration, the fabric of which no longer exists ; also Dresden, &c.,—when he has said, “ Alas ! sir, I am not as yet experienced

in] foreign art"; but adding with great truth, "English china is now the rage, and it sells, and that which sells is naturally the first object of my dealings."

"Admitted," I have replied, "if it be a fine Chelsea vase or figure, a beautiful specimen of old Wedgwood, Worcester or Boir; but these sheep, and modern Derby Falstaffs, modern Shakspeares, cups and coins, are rubbish."

"Well, sir, they sell, believe me, as fast as I can get them; and a piece of fine Bristol, if I ever have the good fortune to find it, is worth a week's labour; and here, sir, is a Lowestoft cup."

"A Lowestoft cup! I have my doubts that the fabric ever existed; and yet I believe there is proof that it did. What do you say to the much-vaunted Sèvres painted with an owl, and a monogram beneath the 'wise bird?' It is believed by connoisseurs to be of Eastern origin, and by no means of Lowestoft manufactory."

Cups of the owl Sèvres have found lunatic buyers at the price of more than £20 each,—for quality and as works of art worth about seven and six-

pence ; but *ainsi va le monde*. Humbug is the oil which works the machinery of life. Then there are Newcastle jugs, the sole rarity of which amounts to a coat of arms or an "open sesame," a square mark, or a crescent mark, or an anchor. If in future ages one of the modern works on porcelain or pottery exists, what will be said of the prices china now commands at sales ? Why, it will leave an impression on the mind that the marks had some reference to religious ceremonies.

Plenty of old china is still to be had of the most charming kind, Oriental, English, French, Italian, as also from the admirable old German fabrics, which is nearly perfect in art, and not at the exaggerated price now given for lots of crockery—mere crockery !

There is no objection to modern china, much of which is beautiful ; but rarity, not merit, with many carries the day. A time will come, nevertheless, when the present taste and rage for aught that is Bristol, or Worcester, or Derby, or aught else that is not purely a work of art, will fade away, and the cupboards of our grandchildren will

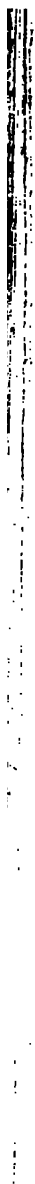
be filled with articles of useless value only fit to pave their garden-walks.

Not for one moment do I presume that my remarks and opinions are correct ; all I assert is that fine art can never be surpassed. It speaks for itself. That any one should seek to have this, that, or the other as a specimen of any particular fabric, I can readily understand ; but that a teapot, or a cream-jug, or a saucepan, because the article is for the time being in fashion, should command the absurd prices now paid, is beyond me, while real *objets d'art* fail to get a purchaser because they are not in fashion.

But works of real art and beauty, to one who has knowledge and love for ceramic art, much of which is to be found in the collections of our leading dealers, and to the collector, are—as is a first-rate horse to a sportsman, or a new bonnet to a young lady—priceless.

THE END.







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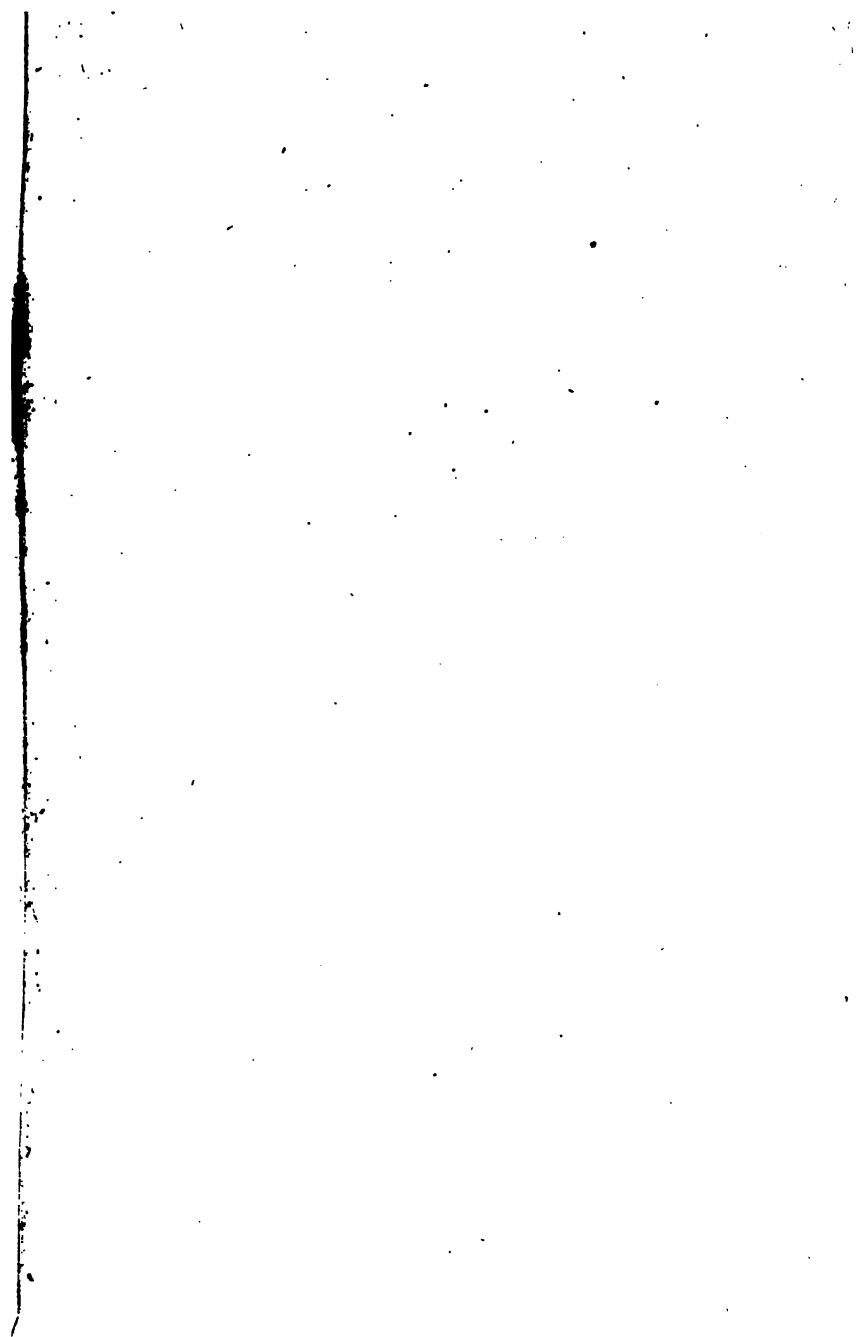
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